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August, 2021 ₹60
Times Of India Publication

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THE BRAVEHEARTS

SIDHARTH MALHOTRA AND KIARA ADVANI
ALL SET TO TELL A HEROIC TALE WITH
AMAZON PRIME VIDEO'S SHERSHAAH

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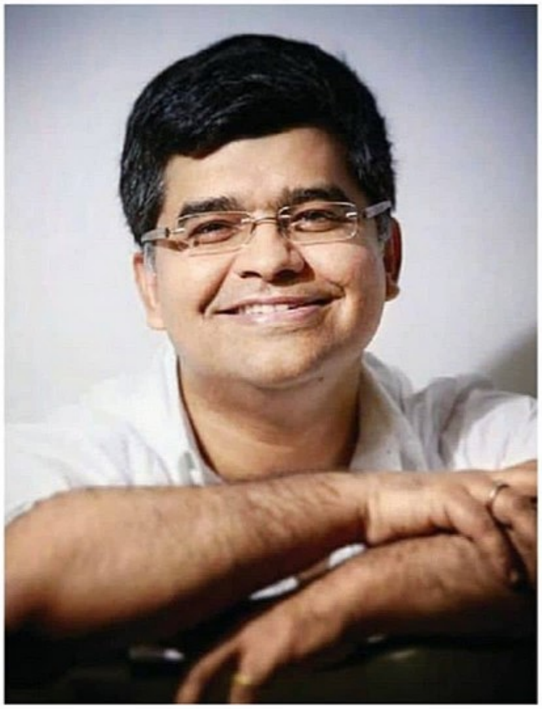
Letter from the Editor

Love in the time of war



Sidharth Malhotra. When he made his debut with *Student Of The Year* (2012) nine years ago, his intensity was noted. He played an underdog in the high school drama. Some even said his brooding persona reminded them of Amitabh Bachchan. That's high praise indeed. From a student, he turned into a *goonda* with Mohit Suri's *Ek Villain* (2014). Critics described him as being immensely watchable even when he was beating up people. His star was said to be on the rise and the romantic-actioner is his biggest hit yet. He played a scientist in his second release of the year *Hasee Toh Phasee*. He gave a restrained performance in the film where co-star Parineeti Chopra took centrestage. He took a risk playing an MMA warrior in *Brothers* (2015), going toe-to-toe against Akshay Kumar and matching the superstar in kicks and punches. He was searching for the right film to come along and that came in the shape of *Kapoor And Sons* (2016). It was both a commercial as well as a critical success. He was praised for his chemistry with on-screen brother Fawad Khan in this family drama. With *Shershaah,* one feels he has again found the right mix of action and drama. He plays Captain Vikram Batra, one of the bravest souls to emerge from the Kargil War. Batra was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest military honour. He had a larger-than-life personality off the battlefield as well and Sidharth looks well suited for the job.

Kiara Advani started life in cinema with a gritty thriller called *Fugly* (2014), which sadly went unnoticed. Her claim to fame was playing Mahendra Singh Dhoni's wife Sakshi Rawat in the 2016 film *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story.* The film became a huge hit and her chemistry with Sushant Singh Rajput was appreciated. Her segment of *Lust Stories* (2018) was judged the best. She played a housewife who discovers her sexuality in the most dramatic manner possible and afterwards got credited for bringing the vibrator out of the closet. Her character Preeti Sikka, from *Kabir Singh* (2019) got her a tremendous amount of fan following. Though critics described her as being timid and backward in the film, the masses fell for Preeti hugely and she began to be enshrined as the perfect *Bandi* -- slang for girlfriend. She displayed her comic side in *Good Newwz* (2019) and showed that she can play a grey-shaded character in her OTT release *Guilty* (2020). In *Shershaah*, she plays Dimple Cheema, who despite not being married to him, chose to live as the widow of her fiance Vikram Batra after he died serving the nation. It's a hugely emotional role for the actor and she's proud to portray a person who believes in everlasting love.

Both Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani feature on our cover this issue. Turn the pages to know more about them and to savour their dishy photographs...

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Jitesh Pillai

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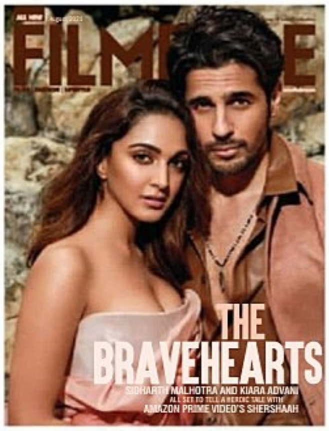
Volume 70 # August 2021 / ISSN NUMBER 0971-7277



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HAIRSTYLIST: HIRAL BHATIA
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FOR SIDHARTH: STYLIST: AKSHAY TYAGI
HAIRSTYLIST: AUN MERCHANT
MAKE-UP: VICKY BATNAKAR
Trench coat : Pawan Sachdeva | Leather Shirt: Zara India | Trouser: Hermes India
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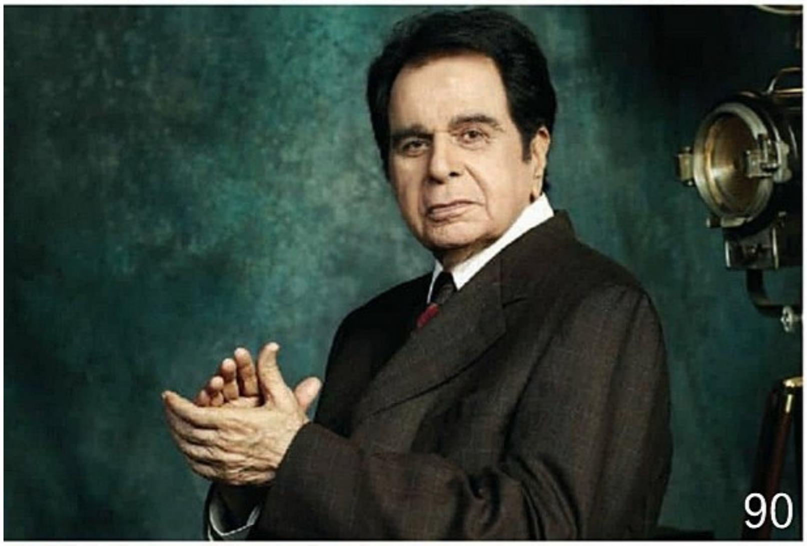
Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra talk about working in the war film *Shershaah*



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Worldwide Media Pvt. Ltd.

RNI No. 1619/1957. Price Rs 60. Printed and published by Sunil Wuthoo for and on behalf of owners Worldwide Media Pvt. Ltd, (CIN: U22120MH2003PTC142239), The Times of India Building, Dr D N Road, Fort, Mumbai 400 001 and printed at Rajhans Enterprises No: 134, 4th Main Road, Industrial Town, Rajajinagar, Bangalore 560044, India.
Processed by BCCL Production Prepress and published at Worldwide Media Pvt. Ltd, The Times of India Building, Dr D N Road, Fort, Mumbai 400 001. Editor: Jitesh Pillaai

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FLYING HOME!

Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has been living in London with hubby Anand Ahuja for around a year now. She even shot for a film called *Blind* in Scotland during this period. It's a thriller based on a 2011 Korean film of the same name and involves a blind police officer in search of a serial killer. She has been majorly missing her family in Mumbai and was waiting for a chance to come back. She was in for a surprise when she landed back in Mumbai as father Anil Kapoor turned up to pick her, leading to an emotional reunion between the two.

Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao part ways *pg 08*

Alia Bhatt-Ranveer Singh to star in *Rocky and Rani Ki Prem Kahani* *pg 10*

PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

Rumours&More

AAMIR KHAN AND KIRAN RAO PART WAYS

Aamir Khan and **Kiran Rao,** who spent 15 years together as a married couple and also have a child – **Azad**, have now decided to part ways. Aamir and Kiran sent out a statement, announcing their separation. "In these 15 beautiful years together we have shared a lifetime of experiences, joy and laughter, and our relationship has only grown in trust, respect and love. Now we would like to begin a new chapter in our lives - no longer as husband and wife, but as co-parents and family for each other. We began a planned separation some time ago, and now feel comfortable to formalise this arrangement, of living separately yet sharing our lives the way an extended family does. We remain devoted parents to our son Azad, who we will nurture and raise together." Speaking about the fate of their organisations, they revealed "We will also continue to work as collaborators on films, Paani Foundation, and other projects that we feel passionate about. A big thank you to our families and friends for their constant support and understanding about this evolution in our relationship, and without whom we would not have been so secure in taking this leap. We request our well wishers for good wishes and blessings, and hope that - like us - you will see this divorce not as an end, but as the start of a new journey. Thanks and love, Kiran and Aamir." It's heartening to see them resolve their issue amicably.

Shah Rukh Khan and Sanjay Dutt to do a film together?

Shah Rukh Khan and **Sanjay Dutt** have been seen together on screen fleetingly. Once in *Ra.One* and the other time in *Om Shanti Om's* title track. However, as per reports, the actors will soon be seen in a full-fledged collaboration. Both SRK and Sanjay Dutt are superstars and their collaboration is sure to create a stir among the audience. The reports state that the actors have already started shooting for the film in Mumbai. The flm is being produced by Viacom 18 and will have them playing crucial parts. It has been tentatively titled *Rakhee*. We are excited for this one, what about you?

ALIA BHATT SIGNS UP WITH A POPULAR HOLLYWOOD TALENT AGENCY

After **Priyanka Chopra Jonas** and **Deepika Padukone,** looks like **Alia Bhatt** is too eyeing Hollywood. She has reportedly signed up with a top Hollywood talent agency – WME. William Morris Endeavour Entertainment (WME) is an American talent company which is primarily located in Beverly Hills, California. Signing with a top Hollywood talent agency means that the young actress is interested in a Hollywood outing. Alia Bhatt recently turned producer for her next film *Darlings* which co-stars **Shefali Shah** and is backed by **Shah Rukh Khan.** And now it looks like the actress is going to take the West by storm with her talent and screen presence. WME handles talents like **Jessica Alba, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Christian Bale, Whoopi Goldberg**. So Alia surely is in august company.

RAM CHARAN BUYS A HOUSE IN MUMBAI

SOUTH SUPERSTAR **RAM CHARAN** HAS BOUGHT A LUXURIOUS BEACH FACING BUNGALOW IN KHAR, MUMBAI. AS HE IS GETTING A LOT OF OFFERS FOR BOLLYWOOD FILMS, RAM CHARAN DECIDED TO BUY A PLACE IN MUMBAI SINCE HE HAD TO STAY IN A HOTEL EVERY TIME HE VISITED THE CITY. RAM CHARAN AND HIS WIFE **UPASANA** HAVE ALREADY PERFORMED THE HOUSE-WARMING CEREMONY. A SOURCE REVEALED, "CHARAN IS DELIGHTED TO HAVE A BUNGALOW IN MUMBAI; HE FEELS IT'S HIS PRIZED POSSESSION AND SOMETHING VERY DEAR TO HIM. SINCE HIS TRIPS TO MUMBAI HAVE BEEN INCREASING SINCE HE STARTED WORKING ON THE **RAJAMOULI**-DIRECTORIAL *RRR*, WE MAY EVEN SPOT CHARAN MORE OFTEN IN MUMBAI." WE SURE WOULD LOVE TO SEE HIM IN HINDI FILMS.

Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh's next with Karan Johar is titled *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani*

Karan Johar announced recently that he will be returning to the director's chair after five years. Treating his fans on his birthday, which falls on July 6, **Ranveer Singh** posted a motion teaser of the title, followed by **Alia Bhatt** and Karan. Titled *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani,* the film will be an entertaining love story. It's the second time after *Gully Boy* that Alia and Ranveer will share the big screen. The film is written by **Shashank Khaitan, Ishita Moitra** and **Sumit Roy** and is expected to hit the big screens in 2022. Announcing the news, Ranveer wrote on his social media, "A special announcement on my special day! Presenting - *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani* along with my dazzling supernova Alia Bhatt, directed by the genre himself, kaleidoscopic visionary Karan Johar, & written by Ishita Moitra, Shashank Khaitan & Sumit Roy. Coming to charm you in 2022!" The film also stars **Dharmendra, Jaya Bachchan** and **Shabana Azmi.**

RANVEER SINGH MAKES HIS TV DEBUT

Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and even **Aamir Khan...** these are a few superstars who made their TV debut by hosting reality and quiz shows. They have had a successful stint with their TV outings and now joining this list is **Ranveer Singh.** The handsome hunk will make his TV debut as a host with a quiz show called *The Big Picture*. Talking about his small-screen debut, Ranveer Singh said in a statement, "In my journey as an artiste, the urge to experiment and explore has been constant. Indian cinema has undeniably given me everything – it's been a platform for me to excel and showcase my skills as an actor, and I have been fortunate to get immense love from the people of India. Now, I look to connect with them in an extremely unique and engaging way through my television debut with *The Big Picture*. The proposition of introducing India to a 'now' generation quiz show sealed the deal for me." We're surely rooting for this one.

BHUSHAN KUMAR ANNOUNCES A BIOPIC ON SAROJ KHAN

ON THE FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF LEGENDARY CHOREOGRAPHER **SAROJ KHAN,** WHICH FELL ON JULY 3, T SERIES HEAD HONCHO **BHUSHAN KUMAR** ANNOUNCED THAT A BIOPIC WILL BE MADE ON HER LIFE. SPEAKING ABOUT THE BIOPIC BHUSHAN KUMAR SAID, "SAROJ*JI* NOT ONLY MESMERISED THE AUDIENCES WITH ACTORS PERFORMING HER DANCE MOVES, BUT SHE ALSO REVOLUTIONISED THE CHOREOGRAPHY SCENE IN HINDI CINEMA. HER DANCE FORMS TOLD STORIES WHICH HELPED EVERY FILMMAKER. SHE BROUGHT AUDIENCES TO THE THEATRES WHO SAW THEIR FAVOURITE ACTORS DANCING TO HER STEPS. SAROJ*JI'S* JOURNEY THAT STARTED AS EARLY AS A 3-YEAR-OLD WAS MET WITH A LOT OF UPS AND DOWNS AND THE SUCCESS AND RESPECT SHE GAINED FROM THE INDUSTRY HAS TO BE BROUGHT TO LIFE. I REMEMBER VISITING FILM SETS WITH MY FATHER AND SEEING HER BRING LIFE TO THE SONGS WITH HER CHOREOGRAPHY. HER DEDICATION TOWARDS THE ART WAS COMMENDABLE. I AM GLAD **SUKAINA** & **RAJU** AGREED TO LET US MAKE THIS BIOPIC OF HER MOTHER." WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THIS STORY TO UNFOLD ON THE BIG SCREEN.

ASHWINY IYER TIWARI AND NITESH TIWARI TO BRING LEANDER PAES AND MAHESH BHUPATHI STORY ON SCREEN

After biopics on **Milkha Singh** (*Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* – 2013), **Saina Nehawal** (*Saina* – 2021) and the upcoming **Mithali Raj** (*Shabaash Mitthu*) biopic, it looks like Bollywood is all set for another sports biopic. **Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari** and her husband **Nitesh Tiwari** recently took to their social media accounts to share news about their next project. They shared pictures of tennis legends **Mahesh Bhupathi** and **Leander Paes**. Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari captioned this picture saying, "I'm honoured and filled with immense gratitude to play my part in bringing this incredible story of the legendary pair of @leanderpaes and @mbhupathi to the world along with @niteshtiwari22 on #ZEE5." Mahesh and Leander are true tennis greats and made India proud by winning three Grand Slams while playing together and a host of individual titles. It would be interesting to see their life story being retold by ace filmmakers Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and her husband Nitesh Tiwari.

SONAKSHI SINHA TAKES THE NEXT STEP IN HER ARTISTIC JOURNEY

Despite the reach that social media gives us, we know little about our stars' hobbies and what they like to do besides going to the gym and making movies. However, it is a well known fact that **Sonakshi Sinha** loves art and is a self-taught artist who has been fascinated by the world of painting for a while now. Every artist has their favourite subject and Sinha loves eyes. Besides the aesthetic aspect of it, she believes that the eyes are the windows to the soul. Now, the actress has come up with House of Creativity along with her brothers, Luv Sinha and Kush Sinha. The House of Creativity is a database of artworks featuring every artistic approach and at the heart of it, Sonakshi Sinha's new initiative will focus on the Indian artistic community and give space to homegrown talent. We wish her luck for her new initiative.

TAAPSEE PANNU LAUNCHES HER PRODUCTION HOUSE, OUTSIDERS FILMS

Taapsee Pannu has added another feather to her cap when she launched her production house, Outsiders Films with **Pranjal Khandhdiya** who has produced films like *Soorma* and *Piku*. "Last year when it was almost a decade since I plunged into the dream this Indian Film Industry is, I never knew I will not just float but actually learn to swim my way through. For someone who never dreamt of being a public figure I am forever grateful to everyone who has bestowed so much love and trust in me and my work. Time for some payback , because with great power comes greater responsibility. So wish me luck and I promise to try my best to bring the best , coz the view is the best from the "outside". Writing a new chapter of life , now as a producer with the "Outsider Films", said she in a statement. Taapsee also praised her partner Pranjal on social media. "And it all started because of his instinct and belief that this crazy combination is worth exploring. The man who runs the show for "Outsiders Films" while I'm allowed to boss around. Pranjal and I will be treading that thin line between friendship and business together, having each other's back, while we make sure your every rupee on our projects is worth it! Cheers," Her first film under the banner will be *Blurr* directed by acclaimed filmmaker Ajay Bahl.

SURIYA'S *SOORARAI POTTRU* TO GET A HINDI REMAKE

Two of India's leading content creators and producers, 2D Entertainment and Abundantia Entertainment announced they're joining hands to remake the globally applauded Tamil film *Soorarai Pottru* (Praise the brave). *Soorarai Pottru* is an emotional and impactful story of Nedumaaran Rajangam or "Maara", played by **Suriya,** who sets out to make the common man fly and in the process takes on the world's most capital intensive industry with the help of his family, friends and sheer will power. The film was partly inspired by events from the life of Air Deccan founder **Capt. G.R. Gopinath**. It was among the ten Indian films to be screened under the Best Foreign Film category at the 78th Golden Globe Awards and was also sent for screening at the 93rd Academy Awards. While the casting for the Hindi remake is yet to be finalised, the director of the original, **Sudha Kongara,** will be directing the Hindi remake as well.

SANYA MALHOTRA JOINS RAJKUMMAR RAO IN THE HINDI REMAKE OF TELUGU FILM *HIT*

THE HINDI REMAKE OF THE TELUGU BLOCKBUSTER *HIT* HAS GOT ITS LEADING LADY. AFTER IT WAS REPORTED THAT **RAJKUMMAR RAO** WILL PLAY THE MALE LEAD IN THE HINDI REMAKE, IT'S NOW BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT *DANGAL* FAME ACTRESS **SANYA MALHOTRA** WILL PLAY THE FEMALE LEAD. THE HINDI REMAKE IS BEING PRODUCED BY T-SERIES AND DIL RAJU PRODUCTIONS. *HIT* STANDS FOR HOMICIDE INTERVENTION TEAM AND THE FILM WILL REVOLVE AROUND A COP WHO IS ON THE TRAIL OF A MISSING WOMAN. **SAILESH KOLANU,** WHO DIRECTED THE ORIGINAL, WILL BE DIRECTING THE HINDI REMAKE AS WELL.

ALAYA F TO STAR IN THE HINDI REMAKE OF KANNADA FILM *U TURN*

ALAYA F MADE HER DEBUT WITH *JAWAANI JAANEMAN* (2020). BEFORE THE ACTRESS COULD ANNOUNCE HER NEXT AND SHOW US SOME MORE OF ACTING METTLE, THE PANDEMIC AND THE LOCKDOWN HAPPENED AND HER LIFE, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE'S, GOT DISRUPTED. ALAYA F HAS NOW BAGGED A BIGGIE AND SHE HAS ALREADY STARTED SHOOTING FOR IT IN MUMBAI. SHE'S GOING TO STAR IN THE HINDI REMAKE OF THE ACCLAIMED KANNADA HIT *U TURN* (2016). THE FILM IS KNOWN AS A GRITTY THRILLER WHICH KEEPS YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT WITH ITS NAIL-BITING DRAMA. THE HINDI REMAKE RIGHTS HAVE BEEN BOUGHT BY **EKTA KAPOOR**. DEBUTANTE DIRECTOR **ARIF** WILL HELM THE FILM. *U TURN* HAS BEEN REMADE IN BENGALI, TAMIL, MALAYALAM, TAMIL AND TELUGU ALREADY. THE FILM HAS SURPRISED THE AUDIENCE WITH ITS CONTENT IN EVERY AVATAR AND ONE HOPES THE HINDI VERSION TOO WILL RETAIN THE MAGIC.

JANHVI KAPOOR ALL SET TO BEGIN SHOOTING FOR THE REMAKE OF MALAYALAM FILM *HELEN*

Janhvi Kapoor is surely picking up the best of the best when it comes to films. The actress who was last seen in *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* is all set for her next film which sounds equally interesting. Janhvi Kapoor will star in the remake of Malayalam film *Helen* (2018), which is a survival drama. The film will be shot on real locations. They'll start shooting the film by August. The crew is currently busy with its pre production. *Helen* is a thriller and released in 2019 and won several accolades. Director **Mathukuttty Xavier** who helmed the original will direct the Hindi version too. Sources also say that the film will be titled *Mili.* Janhvi Kapoor is surely in the mood for some remakes. The other film that the actress wrapped shooting for earlier this year, *Good Luck Jerry,* is a remake of a South film called ***Kolamavu Kokila*** (2018), which starred **Nayanthara.**

JANHVI KAPOOR TO STAR IN KAYOZE IRANI'S NEXT

Boman Irani's son **Kayoze Irani,** who also starred in a supporting role in *Student Of The Year*, is now going to direct a feature film after his short in the anthology *Ajeeb Dastaans.* And we hear he has locked the heroine of the film, too. **Janhvi Kapoor** has been locked to play the main female lead in Kayoze's film. Janhvi and Dharma were supposed to do two films - *Dostana 2* and *Mr. Lele* but both of them got stuck and were delayed. *Dostana 2* is undergoing a massive cast change after Dharma decided to replace **Kartik Aaryan.** So, Janhvi is said to have been offered Kayoze's film instead. It's a strong, emotional romcom reportedly and we've heard that either **Varun Dhawan** or **Sidharth Malhotra** will be paired opposite her.

Dia Mirza And Vaibhav Rekhi welcome their baby boy Avyaan Azaad Rekhi

Dia Mirza and **Vaibhav Rekhi** tied the knot in what was one of the most beautiful and intimate wedding ceremonies in February this year. The couple then announced in April that they were expecting their first baby with a beautiful post from their honeymoon in Maldives. On May 14, Dia took to social media to announce the arrival of her baby boy, **Avyaan Azaad Rekh**i with a picture of the newborn's hand and a note on her experience of childbirth. Dia shared that she faced complications while giving birth and had to opt for a C-section as the baby came earlier than the due date. She shared, "Our heartbeat, our son Avyaan Azaad Rekhi was born on May 14th. Having arrived early, our little miracle has since then been cared for by tireless nurses and doctors in the Neonatal ICU." She further added, "A sudden appendectomy during my pregnancy and a subsequent and very severe bacterial infection could have led to sepsis and proven to be life threatening. Thankfully, the timely care and intervention by our doctor ensured the safe birth of our baby via an emergency C-section." The baby is now being taken care of in the hospital under observation and Dia, along with Vaibhav and his daughter Samaira look forward to having Avyaan home soon. We wish the baby and the family a happy and healthy life ahead.

READY FOR THE BIG JUMP

AAYUSH SHAH

X FACTOR: STARTED OUT YOUNG

Aayush Shah was born and brought up in Mumbai and pursued his education in Philosophy and Political Science. He first realised his love for acting in school where he would participate in plays. This led him to star in his first film in 2008, *My Friend Ganesha 2*. He played the negative character of Rocky in the film. He shot for his first television show *Uttaran* during his college days and later went on to play Ashwatthama in Star TV's *Mahabharata*..He also has shows like *Navya* and *Suryaputra Karn* to his credit and now he's ready to move on to the movies. He looks up to Shah Rukh Khan for his diversity, Akshay Kumar for his action skills, Alia Bhatt for realism in her craft, Johny Lever for his comic timing and Kareena Kapoor Khan for the eternal confidence on screen.

Actors Shahab Ali and Digangana Suyavanshi reveal their hopes and desires *pg 14*

PHOTOGRAPH: AMIT KHANNA

ENTER THE VILLAIN

SHAHAB ALI OF *THE FAMILY MAN* FAME TELLS **ANALITA SETH** THAT PLAYING A BAD MAN PROVED TO BE GOOD FOR HIM

Shahab Ali never expected to be an actor and says sometimes he has to pinch himself to feel the reality of it. He considers his life as an actor to be the typical escapist fantasy. "I come from a family that never went to the theatre to watch a film. It was considered a sin. So I never thought of becoming an actor. I was shy and had stage fright while in school. But something changed when I joined college."

He tried his luck with a college theatre group that did not ask for auditions for admission. This was an easy way into the world of drama. He started doing street plays with the group and slowly gained confidence as an actor as time progressed. He realised he's meant to pursue acting. But before

> **"I come from a family that never went to the theatre to watch a film. It was considered a sin. So I never thought of becoming an actor"**

On the sets of *The Family Man*

The Family Man 2

> **"I got to work with Manoj Bajpayee and share screen space with him. He's a legend and I idolise him. Working with creative minds like Raj and DK too was fun as they constantly tried to attempt something new"**

his dream could take wings, a family tragedy brought him crashing to the ground and he ended up being a TV anchor and journalist to earn money. He found some solace sitting in front of a camera, reporting the news but he was always restless. Shahab quit the job within a few months and went to his mother with a new plan, "I told her I had to try at least becoming a professional actor. She had her doubts and said, "You've only done street theatre, how will you make a career out of it?" I convinced her that I'll undergo proper training and go to a drama school. I told her if I can't do it, I'll become a tailor or a teacher."

He applied to National School of Drama (NSD) and got selected on his second attempt. There, he got a chance to work with veteran theatre directors like Mohan Maharishi, Anuradha Kapur, Abhilash Pillai, Ovlyakuli Khodjakuli and Tripurari Sharma.

After graduating from NSD in 2015, Shahab was lucky enough to get selected as the lead in the musical *Zangoora*, which ran for three years in Delhi. Then, he was picked up as the main lead again in a Mumbai-based stage musical, *Mughal-e-Azam,* where he played Prince Salim. He used to send out audition tapes to different production houses while in Mumbai but wasn't happy with the kind of roles he was getting. Luck beckoned in the form of Raj and DK's *The Family Man* (2019). The show introduced Shahab as Sajid and it's been a rollercoaster ride ever since.

As he revels in the success of the show, Shahab recalls how his family reacted to his decision of taking up acting, "The day I decided to be an actor, I became an outsider in my family. When people ask me how I feel as an outsider in the industry, I don't know what to say as I don't feel like one here." The success of the show has affected his standing within his family. "The laughs have stopped now," he grins.

He spent most of the lockdown in Delhi as the strict regulations didn't allow him to travel to Mumbai. Life was in a bind and he was waiting for Season 2 to air. "For me, the lockdown was not that great. I was at home and had nothing to do. So I was desperately waiting for *The Family Man 2* to come out. I'm so overwhelmed with the response my character got."

He further adds that he's received both love and hate for his character, "Someone told me they can't imagine the third season without Sajid and that I think is the best compliment I can receive. Whatever role you play, you are only a small part of the entire show. But someone can't imagine the show without you, it means the character touched their hearts. I also received a lot of messages saying, "I hate you," and then I'd always reply with a "thank you," because it meant I did a good job with the character I was given."

He worked with such experienced actors as Manoj Bajapyee, Samantha Akkineni and Priyamani and considers himself the luckiest in the entire cast. "I have been doing theatre for a long time and don't have much experience in front of the camera. I got to work with Manoj Bajpayee and share screen space with him. He's a legend and I idolise him. Working with creative minds like Raj and DK too was fun as they constantly tried to attempt something new." He was told to keep a stern visage throughout the shooting and was instructed not to smile at all on the sets, even when the camera was off. It is something he found hard to do. He had several intimate scenes with Samantha but they got cut. Shahab says he has no regrets as Raj and DK know what's best for their series and acted accordingly.

According to reports, he has signed another web series and is waiting for things to get normal and the shooting to begin. "I hope to get back to auditioning as well. I'm hoping my performance in *The Family Man Season 2* will get me some interesting characters." Fingers crossed. ■

HITTING THE HIGH-STAKES

DIGANGANA SURYAVANSHI talks about the transition from television to films in this quick chat with **VEDANSHI PATHAK**

There's more to Digangana Surryavanshi than what meets the eye. She's not merely an actor but a published writer as well. She has authored two books so far. One's a book of lyrics called *Waves: The Endless Emotions*. The other is a fantasy novel called *Nixie The Mermaid and The Power of Love*. Both were written when she was around 16. She's 23 now and has completed her graduation in English from Mithibai college, Mumbai. Her parents treat her like a princess. She was treated to a ritual milk bath on her 23rd birthday last year in October. Her parents showered gold and

> *"TO DO A FILM AND MAKE YOUR WAY IN BOLLYWOOD IS KIND OF A JOB IN ITSELF AND I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE IN THE FILM INDUSTRY AT ALL SO IT WAS LIKE DOING ROUNDWORK AND STARTING FROM SCRATCH"*

pearl ornaments on her and even gifted her silver slippers.

Digangana hails from Madhya Pradesh but was brought up in Mumbai. She started acting at quite a young age. She was just seven when she made her debut with the TV series *Kya Hadsaa Kya Haqeeqat* in 2002. She went on to play supporting roles in shows like *Shakuntala* (2009), *Krisshna Arjun* and *Ruk Jaana Nahin* (2011–12). She landed her big break with Star Plus soap opera *Ek Veer Ki Ardaas... Veera* (2012–15) in the lead role. She was just 17 when she participated in the reality show *Bigg Boss* in 2015 and was the youngest celebrity to do so. In fact, she celebrated her 18th birthday when she was in the house. She could have made many more lucrative deals on television but then film offers started coming her way. She was part of Hindi films like *FryDay* (2018) and *Jalebi* (2018) before gravitating towards South cinema. She made her Telugu debut with *Hippi* (2019) and Tamil debut with *Dhanusu Raasi Neyargale* (2019). She'll be seen alongside Arjun Rampal in The forthcoming *Battle Of Bhima Koregaon.*

Life hasn't been easy for her since her transition from TV to films. Talking about letting go of television when all was going her way she says, "At that point when tempting offers come your way, making the decision of switching from television to films is quite hard. I was used to working every single day on television. And it makes you instantly popular because people have a daily connection with you. I was not used to not being seen at all. And I felt that void. As everyone knows, to do a film and make your way in Bollywood is a job in itself . Besides I didn't know anyone in the film industry at all so it was like doing groundwork and starting from scratch. I'm happy with what I stuck to and what I had put my faith in." She understands that content is king and the popularity of OTT shows is on the rise. Hence, she doesn't deny the possibility of doing a limited series in future.

Being a child artiste, it was difficult for her to juggle the pressures of schooling alongside acting but she persisted. She states people shouldn't jump blindly into acting and should give equal importance to their studies as well. Talking about how her parents reacted to her being creatively inclined since a tender age, she narrates, "t started off very organically. And my parents were always supportive of the choices I made. They taught me to take responsibility for all that I do. They made me independent, and they didn't tell me what I should or shouldn't do. I have always been inclined towards acting,

Jalebi

> “MY PERSONAL SPACE IS EXTREMELY PERSONAL AND I LIKE TO KEEP IT THAT WAY. WHEN YOU ARE NOT PRIVATE ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, IT CAN GET COMPLICATED”

With team *Jalebi*

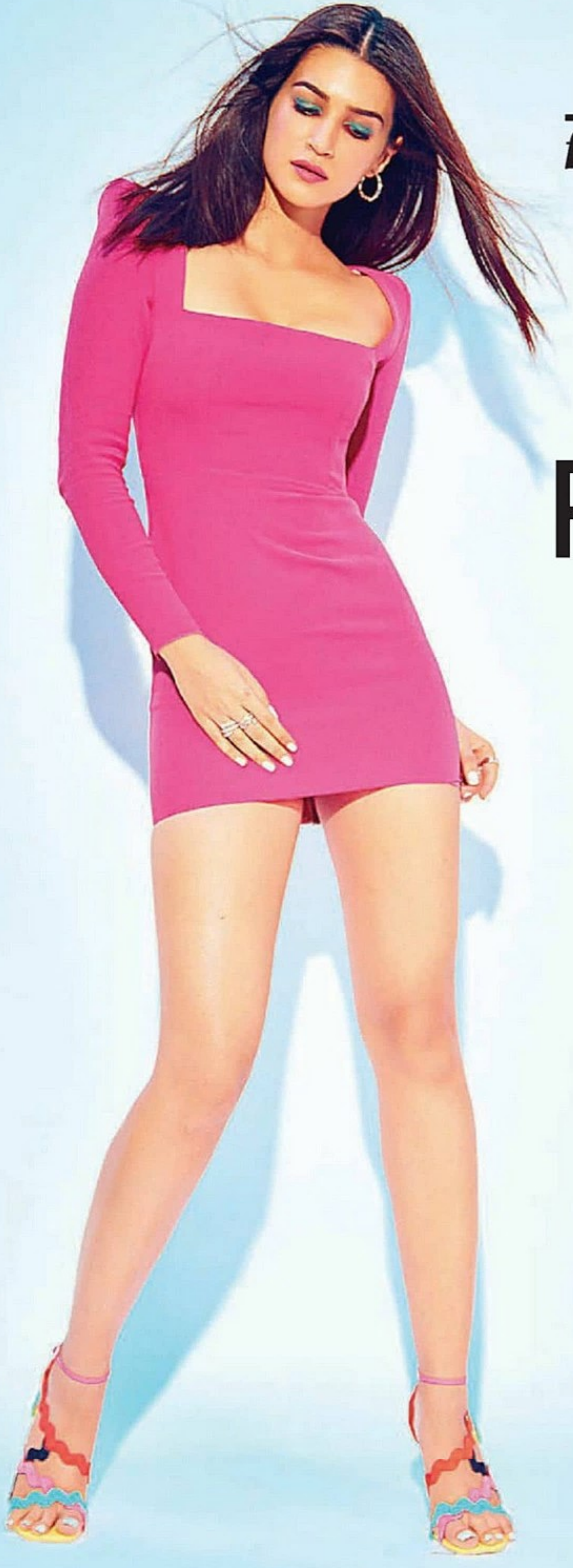
> **“I’VE NEVER BEEN SATISFIED WITH WHAT I’M DOING AS I KNOW THERE’S SO MUCH MORE THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED. I’M TOO YOUNG TO FEEL HAPPY ABOUT WHAT I’VE DONE SO FAR”**

singing and writing. I just followed my heart and everything fell into place.”

She’s a private person at heart and believes in keeping her social media presence to a minimum. She denies having a boyfriend and says even if she was close to someone she wouldn’t tom-tom about it. “My personal space is extremely personal and I like to keep it that way. When you are not private about your personal life, it can get complicated,” she reflects. Apart from acting, if there is one thing that Digangana likes doing, it is writing. She calls it her creative outlet. Talking about how it helps her on dull days, she says, “You may not want to tell people about all the things that you experience. I’m not someone who’ll actually go out there to explain things, or justify my experiences. So writing really helps me release a lot of these experiences.”

She wants to avoid being typecast at all costs and is open to all kinds of roles. In fact, one reason she said no to TV offers was that she was getting roles which were similar to *Veera*. She knew if she said yes, she’d never easily get out of it. “Initially saying no seemed difficult. Because making any decision is difficult at first. That’s how life is. You live and learn,” she muses. Talking about working in the South industry, she says it wasn’t easy at first to work down South as she didn’t know the language. She overcame the difficulty by doing extensive preparation. “I wanted to sound natural saying my lines on camera. It should look like someone native to the language is speaking it. My directors, my writers helped me a lot. They explained the meaning of each word. I kept pestering them about the correct way to pronounce everything. It took some months but when the shooting got under way, I was totally at ease with the script and it all came out natural,” she reveals.

The actor doesn’t have a preference over any particular industry and would continue to shuttle between Hindi and South industries in future. “My only criteria is to do good work. I want to push the envelope with every outing and grow as an actor. Even during my auditions I’ve never felt I wouldn’t be able to do a character as my age doesn’t match or the acting is too technical. I’ve always given my best shot.” She says actors shouldn’t be easily satisfied with what they are doing and should be their worst critics. She maintains that satisfaction is one’s worst enemy. “I’ve never been satisfied with what I’m doing as I know there’s so much more that can be achieved. I’m too young to feel happy about what I’ve done so far. Perhaps fifty years from now, I’ll look back and be happy. There’s lots and lots left to achieve till then.” ■



F&B
fashion and beauty

PINKALICIOUS!

KRITI SANON

WHERE: FOR *MIMI* PROMOTIONS

THE X FACTOR: PINK WITH A POP

Kriti Sanon's wardrobe is a millennial's dream come true. With comfort the only constant, Kriti experiments with styles and shades that make her a perfect girl next door with a sprinkle of sass. During her promotions for her new release *Mimi,* Kriti kept her wardrobe extremely feminine and quirky and one of our favourite looks was this Alex Perry number that she pulled off with aplomb. Styled by Sukriti Grover, Kriti made this simple outfit stand out with her dual-shade eye make-up, her minimal jewellery and statement heels.

Chatting with celebrity stylist Nikita Jaisinghani *pg 20*

Designer Shubhika Sharma gives us fashion goss and *gyan* *pg 24*

COMPILED BY: ANALITA SETH
PHOTOGRAPHS: TEJAS NERURKAR

TALES OUT OF THE CLOSET

NIKITA JAISINGHANI STUMBLED UPON HER CALLING AND NOW SHE STYLES SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MEN IN THE WORLD OF SHOWBIZ. **ANALITA SETH** FINDS OUT MORE ABOUT HER LIFE AS A CELEBRITY STYLIST

She's the woman behind the most dapper man in B-town -- Karan Johar. She knows all his sartorial secrets as she's the brains behind what goes into his wardrobe and what get thrown out. But it's not just Karan that Nikita Jaisinghani loves to style. She's styled for everyone from Abhishek Bachchan, Arjun Kapoor, Aditya Roy Kapur to Siddhant Chaturvedi. And have helped them make a statement. Men's fashion has been the fastest evolving branch of the industry in the last decade. Stars have gradually moved away from the classic tuxedos and tailor-made pants to eye-catching silhouettes and ensembles that have put them on the edgier side of fashion. Unisex prints, silhouettes and colours are the future of fashion and our celebs have taken to them wholeheartedly. Stylists like Nikita Jaisinghani are at the forefront of this mini-revolution. Talking about this shift, the *avant garde* stylist shares her styling secrets with us. Here's how she makes every blazer, every shoe and every sunglass she selects the hottest accessory in town.

Kartik Aaryan

Sidharth Malhotra

Arjun Kapoor

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO BE A STYLIST?

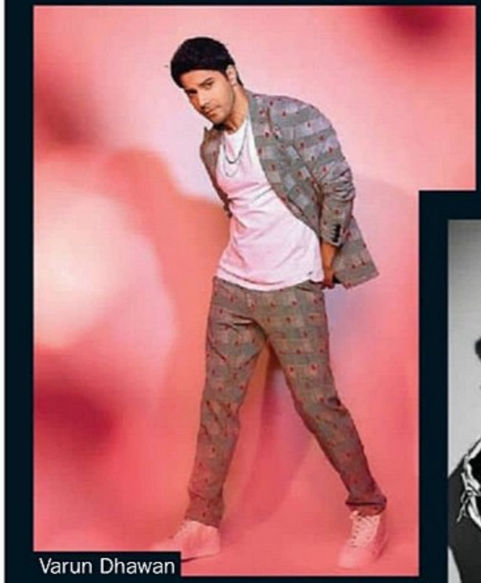
I wanted to do something in entertainment, not necessarily styling. I didn't even know I could do this. This was just a knack I had. I actually studied animation. But then I realised that wasn't my calling. I just got an opportunity to style one day and I enjoyed it. It was just random. Then I got a call to style Karan Johar. I took it up. I remember I went to meet him with a presentation and a mood board and even he was laughing. But it has all paid off very well.

WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF STYLING KARAN JOHAR?

He is now open to wearing different kinds of silhouettes and brands but in the beginning he was slightly apprehensive about that. Earlier, he had restrictions about what colours he would wear, the silhouettes that suited his style but now he's open to experimenting. Also, he's aware about his personal style and fashion in general. I did my homework and I assisted him so I got familiar with his tastes. As for the pros, the biggest one is that he ends up looking nice in anything he wears. For cons, it's the restrictions he has to what he likes and dislikes on his body type. But I can't complain, this is part of every job.

WHO DO YOU FIND HARDER TO STYLE--HIGH ON FASHION KARAN JOHAR OR LOW-KEY ABHISHEK BACHCHAN?

There is back and forth with both of them but you need to understand a person's frame of mind when you're styling them. You have to present the clothes in a way that they end up having faith in you. For instance, when I started styling Abhishek, he was not okay wearing a t-shirt or a knit with a suit. I remember the first time I met him, I said, "I need to change the silhouettes of the suits you wear because I'm not okay with that." So it took us a lot of time, several fittings, meetings and back and forth, to come on the same page. Sometimes he would find


Varun Dhawan

Karan Johar

Karan Johar is now open to wearing different kinds of silhouettes and brands but in the beginning he was slightly apprehensive about that. Earlier, he had restrictions about what colours he would wear, the silhouettes that suited his style but now he's open to experimentation

> *Be it a stylist or a designer, everyone's bleeding but people are trying to help each other. We are all purchasing local and smaller brands and lending support to these smaller businesses... Despite the lack of work, people are not being competitive anymore. We've all taken a step back in the rat race*

Tiger Shroff

Aditya Roy Kapur

something too skinny or I'd find something too flared but then you find a middle ground. For KJo, earlier he would only wear black but now you see him trying all sorts of colours. It's all about faith.

WHAT'S THE ONE LOOK YOU'RE EXTREMELY PROUD OF SO FAR?

I gave Karan a Maison Margiela jacket to wear for an award that looked awesome on him. And one more look that I'm proud of is with Abhishek Bachchan. It's his entire wardrobe for the *Big Bull* promotions. Sometimes when I look back, I wonder, "Wow, what was I thinking, I want to think like that again."

WHAT IS THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITORIAL STYLING AND STYLING FOR AN EVENT?

Editorial is another world. It's a fantasy and does not necessarily have wearable fashion. You mix prints, you layer... so editorial looks you can't wear as a whole and walk out. With red carpet and events, you present it in a way that today a celebrity wears it and tomorrow anyone watching them can try it too. You can easily get inspired by those looks.

ONE PERSON FROM THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY AND ONE FROM HOLLYWOOD THAT YOU WISH TO STYLE...

Diljit Dosanjh and Amitabh Bachchan from Bollywood and Harry Styles from the West. I think he's really cool and I can do something nice with him. I'm putting it out in the Universe now that I'm doing international work.

ARE THERE ANY HACKS FOR STYLING MEN, YOU LEARNT ON THE JOB?

Tight jeans, low-waisted jeans and V-necks are a big no in general for men or boys.

HOW HAS THE FASHION INDUSTRY EVOLVED AND OVERCOME THE PANDEMIC?

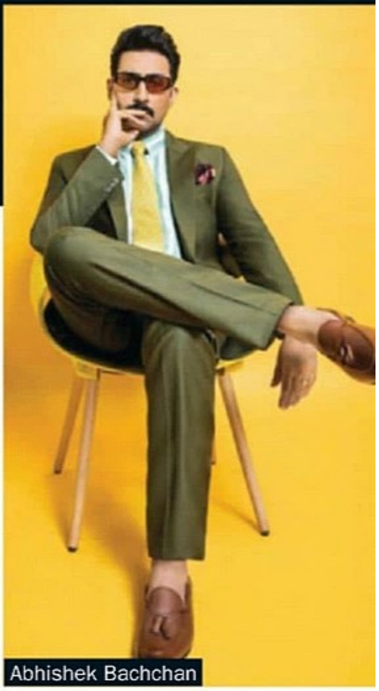
For starters, I feel people are finally coming together. People are now supporting more local businesses. We are more aware of them now than we were before. It has been a struggle for everyone. Be it a stylist or a designer, everyone's bleeding but people are trying to help each other. We are all purchasing local and smaller brands and lending support to these smaller businesses. Influential names in the industry like Rhea Kapoor and Analita Shroff Adajania took the initiative to make people more aware of local brands and labels. It's amazing to see them all come

Alaya F

Siddhanth Chaturvedi

> *When I started styling Abhishek, he was not okay wearing a t-shirt or a knit with a suit. I remember the first time I met him, I said, "I need to change the silhouettes of the suits you wear because I'm not okay with that"*

Karan Johar


Abhishek Bachchan

together. Despite the lack of work, people are not being competitive anymore. We've all taken a step back in the rat race.

WHAT'S THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS THING TO HAVE HAPPENED TO FASHION DURING THE PANDEMIC?

I think what happened with Dolce and Gabbana -- the Asian hate, that was something we hadn't imagined ever. I know it's not related to Indians, but as a whole, it was disheartening to see a particular community being targeted. (For the uninitiated, Dolce and Gabbana promoted their show in Shanghai with a video of an Asian woman trying to eat Italian with chopsticks in 2018. This campaign sparked a fire on its unabashed racism and sexual innuendo. Later, screenshots of their responses to people who criticised them for their campaign surfaced on the internet. In these messages, they compared China to the poop emoji and called it the country of sh*t)

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO BOYCOTT BIG BRANDS LIKE THIS FOR OBJECTIONABLE IDEOLOGIES?

It is difficult to disassociate yourself from a brand when you like a certain aspect of it. When it's a nice piece, it's a nice piece. You can't deny that. It's controversial to say anything but it was bad how they spoke of a particular community. But when I'm shopping, I hardly think so much when picking a brand. Still, if you're someone who people look upto, you need to be conscious of your choices. It's a fine line.

DO YOU THINK MORE PEOPLE ARE SEEING FASHION AS A LUXURY NOW?

Fashion was always a luxury. Necessity is a basic pair of jeans and a t-shirt. In the zone of fashion that is a luxury, people have surely started to understand sustainability and reusability.

IS THERE ANY OTHER STYLIST WHOSE WORK YOU ADMIRE?

For women, I like Mohit Rai. What he does with glamorous looks is exceptional. For men, I like Abhilasha Debnani and Lakshmi Lehr. I'm more quirky but Abhilasha does classic for men beautifully. I don't even want to try doing that because it's too nice. ■

EMBROIDERED SUCCESS

SHUBHIKA SHARMA, THE GENIUS DESIGNER BEHIND PAPA DON'T PREACH SHARES HER JOURNEY TO SARTORIAL SUCCESS WITH **ANALITA SETH**

Kiara Advani

"I'm too young, I oughta live it up," this one line from Madonna's *Papa don't preach* is the mantra designer Shubhika Sharma lives by. No wonder she chose the title of this iconic song as her label. She's bold, beautiful and totally in love with her craft. Selling luxury in upcycled boxes with her unique bridalwear, Shubhika's label, Papa Don't Preach, showcases a millennial take on ethnic couture. You can spot her designs in the crowd. Well, she's put in a lot of hard work to make her signature style stand out. She's redefining bridal wear, one outfit at a time. In a candid chat, the mistress of stitches shares how it all started.

Jacqueline Fernandez

Nushrratt Bharuccha

I think people are becoming more conscious. We regularly get messages asking if our kaarigars are paid well, how many hours they work, etc. The buyer is a lot more conscious and not just in the quality of clothes but also in terms of who is making their clothes

HOW DID PAPA DON'T PREACH GET STARTED?

Growing up I was experimenting with my mother's stitching machine and making my Barbie's clothes. But when I reached my teens, I wanted to do law and international relations. All that led me to doing a Bachelors in Media Management. I also did Journalism from Jai Hind. In my second year, when I was nineteen, I set up my own boutique. I call that my first business acquisition. There was a lady who wanted to sell off her boutique because she needed the money. She wanted 60,000 rupees and I was like, " Oh my god, that's a huge sum." I did have some savings because I worked at DNA for eight months. I went to my dad and he supported me. So I was lucky because I had someone who could financially support me in pursuing something I knew I just had to do. I also knew that the name had to come from a song. It was between *Lucy in the sky* or *Papa don't preach.* The second I saw *Papa don't preach,* I knew it was me and everyone I shared it with agreed.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST STRUGGLE WHEN SETTING UP THE LABEL?

It's a difficult industry to crack and develop contacts. People go to NIFT and other colleges and hence get references to network as someone they know is either working with a magazine or assisting a stylist. I did not have any of that. I had to persistently chase everyone and get my work seen. I do wish the industry was a lot more open in sharing resources and information. I feel if we do that, we will be able to put the Indian fashion industry on the international map which it isn't right now.

WHAT WAS THE MOMENT OF RECOGNITION FOR YOU AS A BRAND?

I still don't feel it's come to me. I started in 2009 when the market completely changed and the dot com bubble burst. Right from my launch in 2009, which was a tough year for retailers and everything was shutting down, nothing has came easy or suddenly to me. But yes, social media helped me. I read the

Madhuri Dixit

messages people send, I interact with them. I thankfully get focussed compliments. People point out why they like the brand. It gives me clues on how to go forward.

WHEN WAS THE FIRST TIME A CELEBRITY WORE ONE OF YOUR DESIGNS?

As soon as I started Papa Don't Preach as a high-street label, I got in touch with celebrity stylist Ami Patel. She called me over to her house. I took all my clothes with me and she liked what she saw. The truth is that Indian market still doesn't have enough designers doing Western wear and it is a real need. People are ready to pay more for Western wear if it's embroidered. So she was excited to find someone who was doing that. She put it on Priyanka Chopra for a press conference and then on Karisma Kapoor for an ad. This was all in the first year of Papa Don't Preach. So we've been lucky.

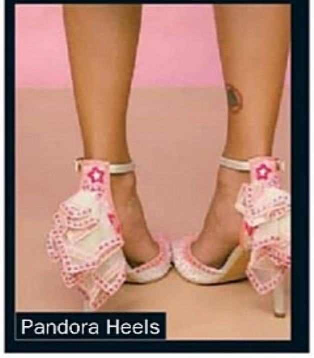
Stars are the de facto fashion influencers in India. As soon as we launched our collection and Alia Bhatt wore our lehenga to her friend's wedding, people were walking in to ask for the "Alia Bhatt lehenga

Alia Bhatt

Yami Gautam in *Ginny Weds Sunny*

Hello Mary Lou Binocular Bag

The Evening Spidey


Pandora Heels

HOW MUCH DOES A STAR WEARING YOUR LABEL HELP YOU AS A BRAND?

Stars are the de facto fashion influencers in India. As soon as we launched our collection and Alia Bhatt wore our *lehenga* to her friend's wedding, people were walking in to ask for the "Alia Bhatt *lehenga*". They all wanted that one piece. We still continue to get orders on that. It definitely motivates the team a lot. It helps you reach out to press a lot more confidently. When it impacts the sales, then I sure feel good about it. I need them for sure. They can make and break your work.

WHO HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE STYLED CELEBRITY IN A PAPA DON'T PREACH NUMBER?

I love how Kiara Advani wore our half *lehenga*. We had the luxury of time to bounce ideas off of each other. She took my belt bag and wore it on the half-*lehenga*. She wanted a gold or a white blouse but I told her to try on the silver blouse and the look that came out of that ended up becoming a trend. Wearing a belt bag with a half-*lehenga* originated because two people, the muse and the designer worked in tandem. For me, that was very special.

HAS THE PANDEMIC CHANGED PERCEPTIONS ABOUT FASHION AND LUXURY CLOTHING?

I think people are becoming more conscious. We regularly get messages asking if our *kaarigars* are paid well, how many hours they work, etc. The buyer is a lot more conscious and not

Zsa Zsa Zsu by Papa Don't Preach

I knew that the name had to come from a song. It was between Lucy in the Sky or Papa don't preach. The second I saw Papa don't preach, I knew it was me and everyone I shared it with agreed

Sara Ali Khan in *Coolie No. 1*

Papa Don't Preach

just in the quality of clothes but also in terms of who is making their clothes. Brands will have to become more aware of how they are treating the people who are making the clothes and what kind of fabric they are using. So there's a constant conversation going on internally on how we can be a more sustainable bridal label. There is talk of whether we should start a program where we ask people to return their *lehengas* after a few years and we get them recycled. This will work internationally but in India, I don't think anyone will part with their bridal *lehengas.* So we are trying to understand how to do all this while working in an Indian ecosystem.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU'VE TRIED TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE BRAND WHILE BEING A LUXURY LABEL?

We are already one hundred percent cruelty free which means we don't use any animal products, no glue, leather or fur in anything. Secondly, I feel sustainability is so vast as a subject that it takes a brand many years to become completely sustainable. We have to also acknowledge that we are still a poor country. We don't have the support of the government if we take on these initiatives. Whatever you do take on, is going to fall on the individual running the label. There will always be expenses to consider. But how we started was firstly getting self-aware that we use a lot of embroidery material that is largely plastic, sequin, acrylic and it's not biodegradable. We compensate for that by not making large collections. We don't manufacture a lot of stock. We never had a dead stock or any wastage at all. In terms of packaging, we are trying to be conscious that there is no wastage. Sustainability also involves how you take care of your *kaarigars*, their working hours, their pay, the health benefits they get, etc. We say it with pride that we take care of all of that. Being a couture label, we know no matter how much we try, we will never be entirely sustainable. I can start a separate line like Anita Dongre who started Grassroot which is an organic line. But bridal wear is never going to become sustainable and if it does happen, it won't look the same. Our footwear, bags and even outfits are made-to-measure. This means we are not sitting with a ready stock. You have to place your order. We take about eight weeks to get it ready and delivered. For the bags and shoes we use all vegan material. For packing, we use our recycled scraps of fabric. When we ship internationally, we use upcycled cartons and our clients are more than happy to accept those. ■

Yami Gautam

TRUE GRIT

I'm anxious to see what Captain Batra's family thinks of the film. This is my first time playing a real-life character, a real-life true hero, where I'm doing all the things which might look heroic and filmy but they actually happened
- **SIDHARTH MALHOTRA**

Vikram Batra was a hero in every sense. For us, the people we are most excited to see the reaction of would be the family. I want to see what Dimple feels
- **KIARA ADVANI**

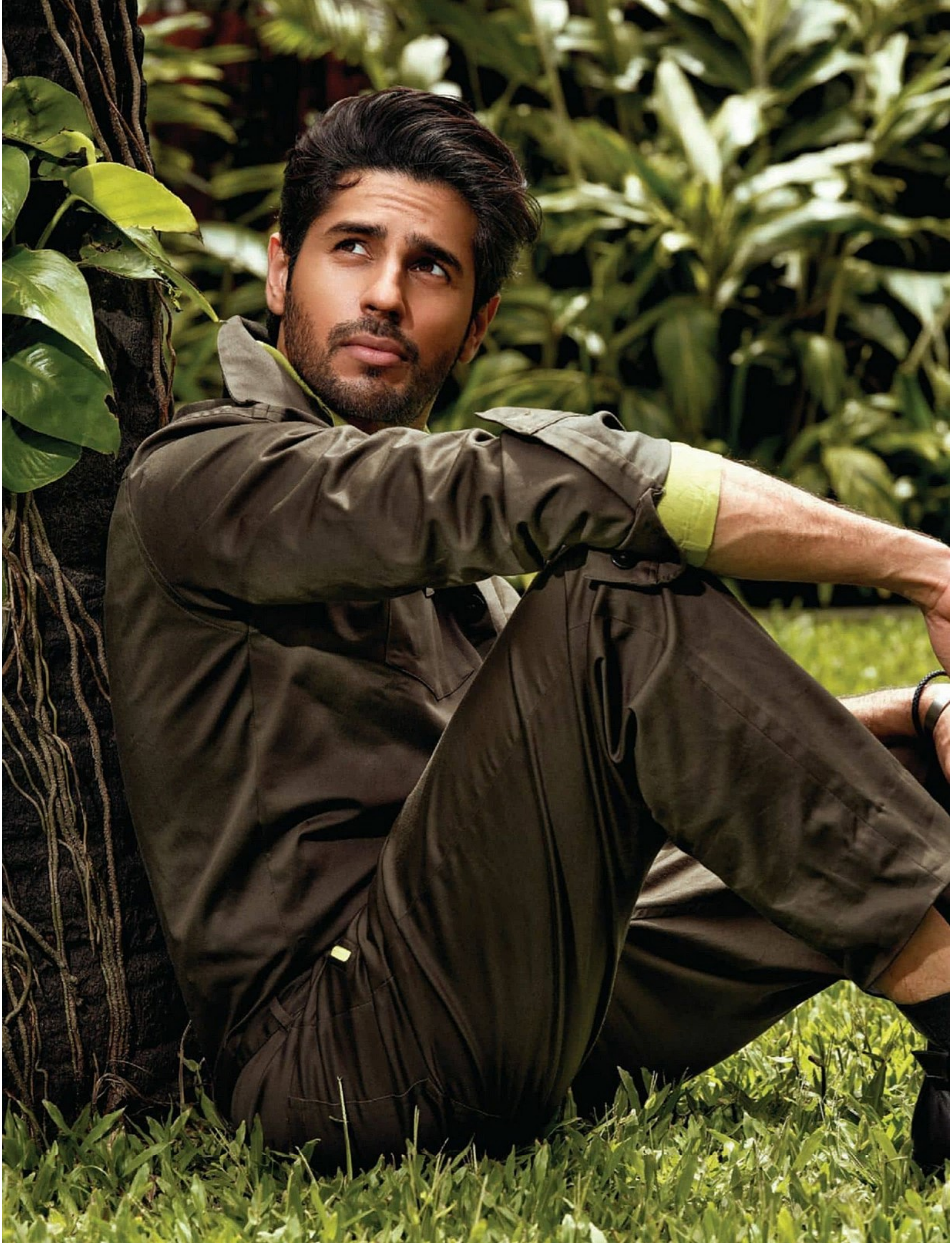
PHOTOGRAPHS: PRASAD NAIK
LOCATION: TAJ LANDS END (MUMBAI)
FOR KIARA: STYLIST: MANEKA HARISINGHANI
MAKE-UP: LEKHA GUPTA | HAIRSTYLIST: HIRAL BHATIA
FOR SIDHARTH: STYLIST: AKSHAY TYAGI | MAKE-UP: VICKY BATNAKAR | HAIRSTYLIST: AUN MERCHANT

UNITED IN COURAGE

SIDHARTH MALHOTRA AND **KIARA ADVANI** ARE SET TO SHOWCASE A TERRIFIC TALE OF LOVE, LOSS AND VALOR IN *SHERSHAAH*. **RAHUL GANGWANI** CATCHES UP WITH THE NEW PAIR, WHO ARE BRIMMING WITH PRIDE AND ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THEIR LATEST OFFERING

We've just finished an extensive outdoor photoshoot with Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani. It's been a long day's work and while everyone else is close to exhaustion, the cover stars are raring to go. They are crackling with palpable energy. Maybe it's the black coffee they're having, maybe it's the excitement for their big release *Shershaah*, maybe it's just the way they are... Their energy is something we could use in large measures, right now. Exhausted as we are from the heat outside. As they sit down for a chat in their suite at the Taj Lands End, we can clearly see the pride in their eyes. They've put in a lot of hard work in the film and can't wait for the world to witness the heroic tale of the Kargil martyr, Captain Vikram Batra (PVC). Amazon Prime Video's *Shershaah* is a biopic on the braveheart who gave up his life for his country during the Kargil War. The trailer of the film was unanimously appreciated. It gave a good idea of the blood and sweat Sidharth has put in to portray his character convincingly. Kiara Advani plays Dimple Cheema, the martyr's fiance and his biggest emotional support. The experience of doing this film has definitely been an enriching journey for the two actors. Hearing the real-life stories, reliving their struggles has changed their perceptions about love, life and the armed forces. What's more, the film has also bought the two of them closer than ever before. Professionally speaking, the film has all it takes to be a complete game changer for both Sidharth's and Kiara's careers. Excerpts...

PHOTOGRAPHS: PRASAD NAIK | LOCATION: TAJ LANDS END (MUMBAI)
FOR KIARA: STYLIST: MANEKA HARISINGHANI | MAKE-UP: LEKHA GUPTA | HAIRSTYLIST: HIRAL BHATIA
Shorts & Top: Zimmermann | Earrings: Chanel at RISN Jewels | Rings: Ayana Silver Jewellery, Anushka Jain Jewellery
Bracelets: Hermes | Heels: Christian Louboutin
FOR SIDHARTH: STYLIST: AKSHAY TYAGI | HAIRSTYLIST: AUN MERCHANT | MAKE-UP: VICKY BATNAKAR
Jacket: Hermes | Tank Top: Zara India | Shirt: Pero By Aneeth Arora | Trousers: Khanijo | Shoes: Daponair
Signet Ring And Necklaces: Misho Designs | Signet Ring: Bebajrang



Overall: MR. Berry
Jumper, Boots, Jewelry: Hermes
Sunglasses: Stylists Own

> I FEEL WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING A REAL-LIFE CHARACTER YOU HAVE CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS AND YOU NEED TO DO CERTAIN THINGS THE WAY THEY ACTUALLY HAPPENED- SO, I GOT A LOT OF INFORMATION FROM HIS FAMILY, HIS PARENTS - SIDHARTH

A BIG FILM RELEASE AFTER A LONG TIME FOR YOU BOTH, WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR MINDS RIGHT NOW?

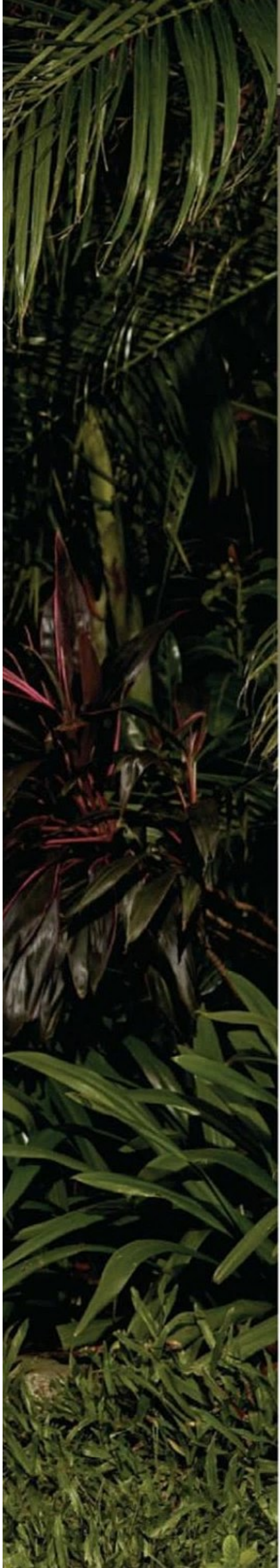
Sidharth: Yes, a film for me after a long while because of various reasons. There is a lot of intrigue and anxiety, especially because this format is new to me. *Shershaah* is releasing on OTT due to the current situation, people will see it on Amazon. Of course, it's a film I've been a part of for many years. I remember meeting Captain Batra's family towards the end of 2015 and around the beginning of 2016. It has been a long journey because the film changed hands in terms of producers and the director. The only thing which was constant was me, so I'm happy that it's finally out for the people to see. I think in this medium it will get a much wider reach and people from around the world, specially in today's circumstances, will get to see *Shershaah.*

Kiara: It's got its heart and soul in the right place. I'm excited for people to see the film. At the age of eight, I was aware of the Kargil War, but I learnt so much more after playing the character of Dimple Cheema in the film. Knowing the story just fills my heart with so much pride. I'm excited and grateful to be a part of it and excited for people to watch it.

THE FILM WILL AIR ON AMAZON. DOES THAT TAKE THE STRESS AWAY A BIT FOR AN ACTOR, AS BOX-OFFICE NUMBERS AREN'T AN ISSUE?

S: I've never experienced it so it's a new world for me and I'm sure for all other actors too. We all were launched in Hindi movies that were released in the theatres and have only done movies for theatres. So, I'm intrigued to experience this new feeling because it's not about that

Dress: Alice Mccall
Trench: Burberry
Earrings: Fasaana
Boots: Hermes



> I FEEL THAT THEIR LOVE FOR THOSE FOUR YEARS, THEIR RELATIONSHIP MUST HAVE BEEN SO STRONG AND SO SOLID THAT SHE CHOSE THAT NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN IF IT'S JUST BEEN FOUR YEARS, THIS IS THE ONLY RELATIONSHIP I WANT IN MY LIFE
>
> – KIARA

Friday, which possibly might be a relief. But there is that culture of watching cinema that I grew up on or what all of us are used to. I am a fan of that big-screen cinema, so I think that will never die for me. But with the current circumstances and Amazon having a wide reach, it will open up many more doors. It will definitely give us more screens. People will see it in the comfort of their homes, they'll probably rewind the stuff they like or watch it at their own pace.

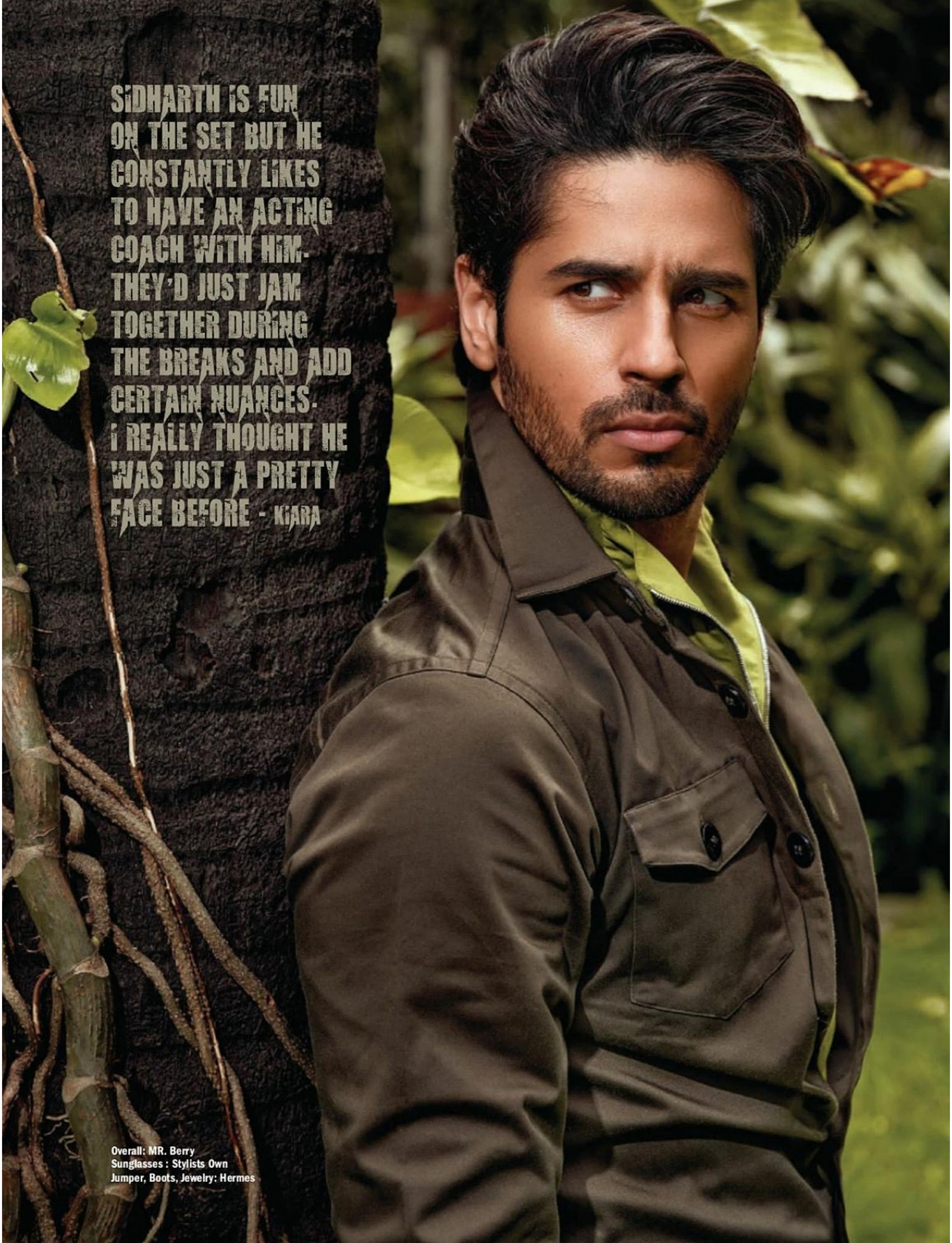
KARGIL IS ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE AND MEMORABLE VICTORIES FOR OUR ARMY. AND CAPTAIN VIKRAM BATRA WAS A REAL-LIFE HERO. WHAT CAN PEOPLE EXPECT FROM THE FILM?

S: I'm anxious to see what Captain Batra's family thinks of the film. This is my first time playing a real-life character, a real-life true hero, where I'm doing all the things which might look heroic and filmy but they actually happened. We are not making stuff up. All the action in the film, even the dialogue are memorable, the quotes "*Dil Maange* More", "*Ya toh tiranga lehra ke aaunga ya tirange mein lipat kar aaunga*" all these might sound very filmy but these are researched and this is what he said. I'm eager to see what his twin brother Vishal thinks, his parents also, because they are the ones who I met first. Like your first film chooses you, for me I think after many years this film has chosen me. So yes, it includes Kargil and a soldier's journey. We have also gone a little bit on India's take on the war field, or what is happening politically in the film and we've touched on his personal love story. Kiara is playing the role of a person who exists in real life i.e. Dimple Cheema. She is still here with us.

K: He was a hero in every sense. For us, the people we are most excited to see the reaction of would be the family. I want to see what Dimple feels.

HOW DID THE ROLE COME TO YOU?

S: Shabbir Boxwala, the original producer of the film, went to Captain Batra's family and said we want to make a film on your son. Captain Batra's twin brother Vishal and his father had two dreams - one was to write a book and the other was to make a film on Vikram. So, the book happened and Shabbir Boxwala became the medium for the film about five years ago. I look like a Punjabi guy and share certain similarities with Vikram, if you see his interviews. We have similar family backgrounds as well. So that's when the conversation started. I had heard of Vikram, of his story, of his iconic line "*Yeh Dil Maange* More" in the battlefield and I was intrigued to know what they were making on it. But then it took a long journey because there was a lot of material to write and the script took a long time to come through. Initially, it was with a different production house. I being a Dharma loyalist took it to Karan saying there is a lot of work in this film. And even though Dharma had never done a film like this then, they've recently done *Gunjan Saxena,* which happened after *Shershaah,* they liked the material. So *Shershaah* was the first biopic they greenlit in the company. They got Vishnuvardhan on board as the director, then we had Kiara on board as Dimple. So, I think it's



SIDHARTH IS FUN ON THE SET BUT HE CONSTANTLY LIKES TO HAVE AN ACTING COACH WITH HIM. THEY'D JUST JAM TOGETHER DURING THE BREAKS AND ADD CERTAIN NUANCES. I REALLY THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A PRETTY FACE BEFORE - KIARA

Overall: MR. Berry
Sunglasses : Stylists Own
Jumper, Boots, Jewelry: Hermes

Trench Coat: Aroka
Leather Shirt : Zara India
Cargo Trouser: Jack n Jones
Boots: Hermes
Watch: Alexander Christie
Bracelet: Hermes India
Beaded Bracelet: Misho Designs
Chain Link Bracelet: Inox Jewelry

Dress: Stylist's Own
Earrings: Vintage Christian Lacroix
Heart Earrings From Viange Vintage
Rings: Ayana Silver Jewellery,
Fasaana, Inaya Accessories
Heels: Jimmy Choo

> WHEN I HEARD THE NARRATION AND ALL THE SCENES OF THE LOVE STORY, I WAS LIKE 'IT'S QUITE FILMY' BUT WHEN I MET DIMPLE, I REALISED THAT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED- SHE NARRATED THOSE VERY SCENES
>
> - KIARA

got a very unique journey. It tries to say a lot about the personal aspect of a soldier's sacrifice and the political environment we were in at that time.

WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE KARGIL WAR?

K: I was about eight years old but because it was big and televised, I'm sure my parents and relatives were aware of it through the news channels. I obviously got to know so much more about it by being a part of the film. Which is why I'm hugely excited about it and I can't wait to share it with the people. This is one way of paying homage to Captain Vikram Batra in an entertaining way and also making people aware of the war and of everything that took place at that time.

S: I was 14 or 15 years old. I remember NDTV being the first channel which brought an Indian war right to our homes. We all know that Barkha Dutt went there at that time. I've watched those snippets and it's kind of surreal to now realise that I'm playing out those very situations. We have mentioned it in our first teaser as well that it was India's first televised war. That's what I remember as a child, at home flipping channels and my parents watching it. I remember this line of Vikram Batra when Barkha (Dutt) interviewed him and he said "*Yeh Dil Maange* More". It is a surreal experience today to actually play that character that we all were sitting at home in Delhi watching, and to say that iconic line.

> I REMEMBER MEETING CAPTAIN BATRA'S FAMILY TOWARDS THE END OF 2015 AND AROUND THE BEGINNING OF 2016. IT HAS BEEN A VERY LONG JOURNEY BECAUSE THE FILM CHANGED HANDS IN TERMS OF PRODUCERS AND THE DIRECTOR. THE ONLY THING WHICH WAS CONSTANT WAS ME, SO I'M HAPPY THAT IT'S FINALLY OUT FOR THE PEOPLE TO SEE - SIDHARTH

SIDHARTH, YOUR FAMILY HAS BEEN IN THE DEFENSE FORCES. HOW DID THEY REACT WHEN THEY SAW YOU IN THE UNIFORM IN THE POSTERS?

S: My father's very excited. He was recently sending me pictures of my grandfather serving in the army. One more similarity between Vikram Batra and my family would be that my *Dadu* was in the Indian Army. My dad went into the Merchant Navy after wondering whether to join the Indian Navy. Vikram Batra was deciding whether to go in the army or the Merchant Navy at the start of his career. My Dad got excited to see me in uniform. I unfortunately didn't interact much with my grandfather as he passed away when I was young. I only have pictures and memories and stories about him told by my grandmother. I have some cousins and I have other grandparents who are from the armed forces. I'm excited to show the film to them.

TELL US ABOUT THE TRAINING YOU WENT THROUGH FOR THIS ROLE.

S: I feel when you're playing a real-life character you have certain restrictions and you need to do certain things the way they actually happened. So, I got a lot of information from his family, his parents. He has a lovely house in Palampur which I went to, where we were shooting as well. They have a two-storey bungalow and they have made a museum on the first floor. Thanks to Shabbir, we interviewed all his comrades who were fighting with him. So, we had a lot of footage, they would narrate stories like the first time he experienced a bullet rushing past his ear or how Kargil treated him. They said he loved leading from the front. He didn't have to but that's the way he was. We also met Major Jamwal, who is a character in the film. He met us again during the training of the film and we got the cast together in Mumbai and trained for about a month with actual drills and with the army personnel training us from the basics - from holding weapons to having army decorum. The only person

Trench Coat: Aroka
Leather shirt: Zara India
Cargo Trouser: Jack n Jones
Boots: Hermes
Watch: Alexander Christie
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Chain Link Bracelet: Inox Jewelry

I have not really met and discussed his life with is Dimple Cheema.

K: I have met Dimple. It's interesting because we always hear the sacrifices of the men but it's beautiful to know that there is a human side, there is a personal life they have and the support they get from their families or loved ones that we don't really know of. I spoke with Dimple and heard her reminisce about their years of courtship and the love that they shared. She still remembers him with so much fondness and she speaks about how they are going to meet soon. She believes in eternal love and romance which is just so beautiful and really tugged at my heart. It is amazing to see somebody who is so strong and who's stuck by her decisions and made the choices she's made and still leads a happy life. Just having him in her heart and memories is enough for her. So, this is what really touched my heart.

SHE NEVER MARRIED, RIGHT?

K: She never married. She chose to live her life as his widow despite never marrying him.

AS A WOMAN YOURSELF, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT DECISION?

K: I feel that their love for those four years, their relationship must have been so strong and so solid that she chose that no matter what, even if it's just been four years, this is the only relationship I want in my life. She does believe that they will meet again someday on a different plane. I almost wanted to ask her, 'did you ever think of moving on'? But I didn't.

S: I think that speaks volumes about their relationship. In those four years, they only met for a couple of months. They were either in college or he was working. They were on the brink of getting married when they realised there was a conflict happening and they all saw him on television. And they realised that it was the last time they would see him. So, it is a shock for her family. I'm sure it's far more severe for the loved ones who are left behind because they have to bear the pain all their lives.

K: I loved the way she supported him. Even in the moment where he considered joining the Merchant Navy, she was with

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> THIS IS ONE WAY OF PAYING HOMAGE TO CAPTAIN VIKRAM BATRA IN AN ENTERTAINING WAY AND ALSO MAKING PEOPLE AWARE OF THE WAR AND OF EVERYTHING THAT TOOK PLACE AT THAT TIME
>
> – KIARA

him. She supported him in his dream of joining the army. She didn't want to hold him back from what he wanted to do and inspite of having only 12 months of physical contact over those four years because of his career, it's amazing how much those months must have meant. Like Sidharth said, it really speaks volumes of their relationship. When I heard the narration and all the scenes of the love story, I was like 'it's quite filmy' but when I met Dimple, I realised that this is exactly what happened. She narrated those very scenes. Even the way he proposes to her – by cutting his finger and putting his blood in her *maang*. And I'm like 'this happens in movies only'.

DID IT CHANGE THE PERCEPTION OF LOVE FOR YOU GUYS?

S: Absolutely. You have more respect for them and it's difficult to relate to your own self because there's a much more intense relationship when they are not together. But it's commendable that the other partner who's left behind is still so intensely in love and has chosen to spend her life with his memories. It's a wonderful thing. I think it's lovely that there is still love like this in our generation.

HAS THIS FILM GOT BOTH OF YOU CLOSER?

S: *(Laughs)* She is speaking a bit of Punjabi and that has gotten us closer. We were practicing speaking Punjabi in Chandigarh when we started, so culturally we have gotten closer.

K: Before I worked with Sidharth on this film, I always thought he was this good-looking boy who is a great fun person. And as an actor I liked his work in *Hassee Toh Phassee, Kapoor And Sons* and a couple of his films. But working with him I realised that there is a side of him which he doesn't show to a lot of people or even if he does, I think that is yet to be explored by people who have not worked with him. He's passionate as an actor and as a film artiste because I know he dreams of directing, making, producing film. And I feel that he is very close to that because of his understanding of cinema and because he has worked as an AD. There are very few actors who are so driven and he is extremely focused on the set. He is not someone faffing about behind the monitor, chatting and chilling. He's fun on the set but he constantly likes to have an acting coach with him. They'd just jam together during the breaks and add certain nuances. I really thought he was just a pretty face before.

WHAT WAS YOUR PERCEPTION ABOUT HER?

S: We had met on the set of *Lust Stories*. She has worked for quite a few years and still has a very non-filmy vibe. She could be working in any other profession and I find that refreshing. Maybe because I don't come from this background myself. I come from a working class, middle class Punjabi household in Delhi. So, I find that refreshing and endearing at the same time. Looking at this from a very professional point of view, this is our job but we also have our lives and you need to balance that. Which is where we actually bonded - our attitude towards our work is quite similar. If you meet us travelling the world, people won't be able to guess what our job is. I sometimes do that for fun. When people abroad talk to me, I make up things and not tell them I am an actor. ■

STAYCATIONS AT THEIR FINEST

Taj Lands End, Mumbai, offers the best in luxury and comfort for both business and leisure travellers

With a view overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Bandra Worli Sea Link, Taj Lands End, Mumbai is unarguably the crown jewel of the pulsating coastal suburb. The hotel boasts of the finest accommodations, dining experiences and elegant conferencing and banquet facilities that can be found in Mumbai city. Although contemporary, it reflects India's warm and heartfelt tradition in hospitality.

Redefining style and comfort, their all-encompassing rooms and suites offer spectacular views of the majestic Arabian Sea and make the stay inside just as delightful as the outdoor areas of this hotel.

You will be pampered by their world-renowned chefs. You can enjoy sumptuous in-room dining experiences, curated to perfection. Food connoisseurs from all over the world favour the collection of fine-dining restaurants at Taj Lands End, be it the signature Indian cuisine at Masala Bay, skilfully designed cocktails at the House of Nomad or the flavours of authentic Sichuan and Cantonese specialties at Ming Yang. The popular all-day-dining restaurant, Vista serves a medley of flavours from the world-over and is renowned for its delectable Champagne Brunch. A gourmet's

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REDEFINING STYLE AND COMFORT, THE TAJ LANDS END'S ALL-ENCOMPASSING ROOMS AND SUITES OFFER SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF THE MAJESTIC ARABIAN SEA

paradise, these are just a few of the many options the hotel offers.

For aficionados, looking to experience the finest, the Atrium Bar & Lounge offers the largest documented selection of whiskeys on the menu along with iconic concoctions definitive of the Golden Age. From Cappuccinos to Cocktails, Teas to Tequila, Mocktails to Malts, it gives you every reason to cheer, sit-back and relax, while you watch the sun set over Bandra's charming seascape.

And if one wants a little pampering, niu&nau is the place to be at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. It's not just a salon, it's an experience. At niu&nau, they don't just craft a look, they create a feeling. What's more, their gentleman's barbering section offers the finest grooming treatments. With a niche sense of style, this salon brings a full regimen of services for men spanning hair, beauty and skincare. The gentleman's barbering section is outfitted with the most modern equipment and stocked with the hottest beauty brands.

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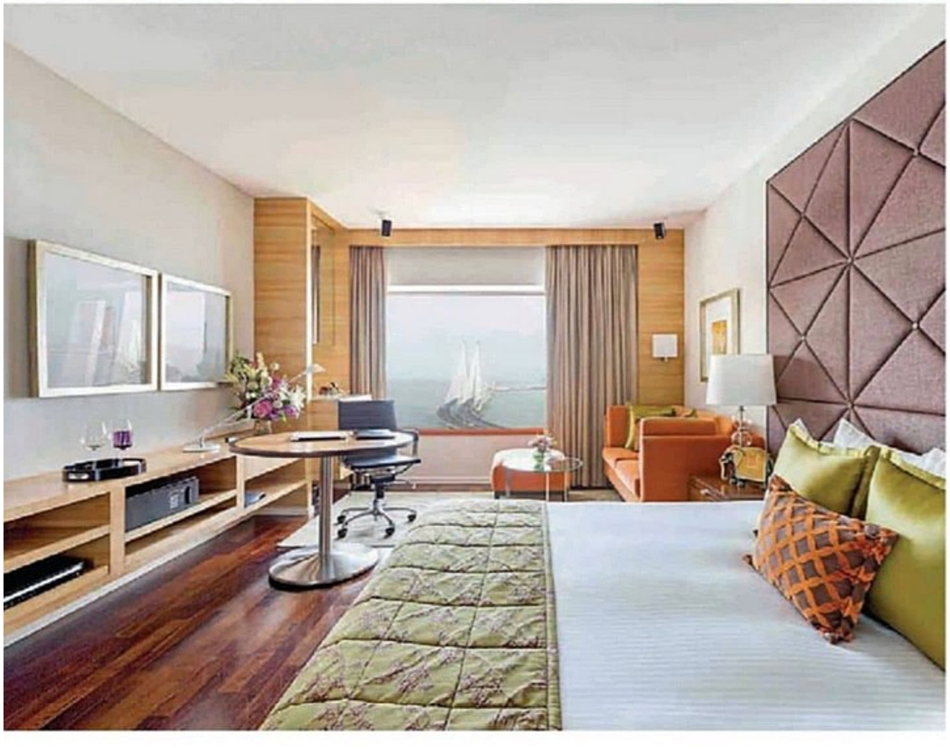

A JOURNEY CALLED *LAGAAN*

LAGAAN, RELEASED IN 2001, RECENTLY COMPLETED 20 YEARS OF ITS RELEASE. AS **AAMIR KHAN** TALKED TO THE PRESS ABOUT REACHING THE MILESTONE, **VEDANSHI PATHAK** TOOK NOTES

Cricket is the opium for the Indian masses, and films are another drug of choice. Combine the two and you have something that offers an escapist fantasy like never before. Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan*, starring Aamir Khan and Gracy Singh in lead roles, had everything one could wish for. Scintillating performances by the entire cast, a great musical score by AR Rahman, period elements, nationalistic fervour, a thrilling story and the excitement of an India-Pakistan cricket match. No wonder it became an instant classic whose cult status keeps on increasing every year. Excerpts from a candid interview with Aamir Khan, who takes us on a nostalgia-filled journey...

← *Lagaan*

What is that one thing that has stayed with you from the *Lagaan* days?

One thing that remains with me is the way Reena (ex-wife) handled the film. Though she was married to me for a number of years, she was not interested in films. When I requested her that I would need her help, and wanted someone who I could trust completely, she agreed. She went and met Subhash Ghai and Manmohan Shetty, who used to run a film lab. She asked them to show her what is processing, printing, and what is a lab process. She went and met producers, directors, technicians. She cracked it as if she was a veteran. It was remarkable the way she controlled everything.

Do you have any regrets that you came so close to winning an Oscar?

In Los Angeles, they consider when you are a nominee, you are all standing on the finish line, so all are equally good. Then one person is told to go ahead by one step so that one becomes the winner, but the remaining four are just one step behind. A nomination gives you the opportunity of increasing your audience as people worldwide get curious about your film. And that is how I looked at it. Winning an award is not that important for me. For me, the audience is number one, not Oscars or any other award.

***Lagaan* was your first production. How do you feel it changed your career?**

Just a few weeks before I left for shooting, I met with Aditya Chopra and Karan Johar at Anil Thadani's party. Both are good friends of mine and they were genuinely concerned. They said, "You are making such a huge film as your

“THOUGH SHE (REENA DUTTA) WAS MARRIED TO ME FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, SHE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN FILMS. **WHEN I REQUESTED HER THAT I WOULD NEED HER HELP, AND WANTED SOMEONE WHO I COULD TRUST COMPLETELY, SHE AGREED**”

PHOTOGRAPHS: TARUN VISHWA

first production. We don't know what film you are making." We had kept the cricket part under wraps so they didn't know about that. But they knew that I was going for a single schedule film with sync sound. They suggested that I shoot for 30 days, edit, come back, and take a call. But the fact is that I wanted to do sync sound and single schedule at least five years before *Lagaan* happened. Sometime in 1995, I remember telling Dharmesh Darshan and Ram Gopal Varma that let's make the film in a single schedule, and do sync sound because the emotion that was coming when I was performing live was getting wasted. So I experimented with the single schedule, sync sound, and I also brought the first-AD (Assistant Director) system. I had gone to New York, and I locked Apoorva Lakhia as the first AD. He also knew Gujarati, and he could communicate with the villagers. That experiment was a success. I have only done sync sound since then. All my films are single schedule and all my films have the first-AD system. As a comic aside, after advising me not to do all these things, Aditya and Karan have been following exactly this. They do one-schedule films, they all do sync sound, and they all have a first-AD system.

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How do you look at your journey as a producer so far?

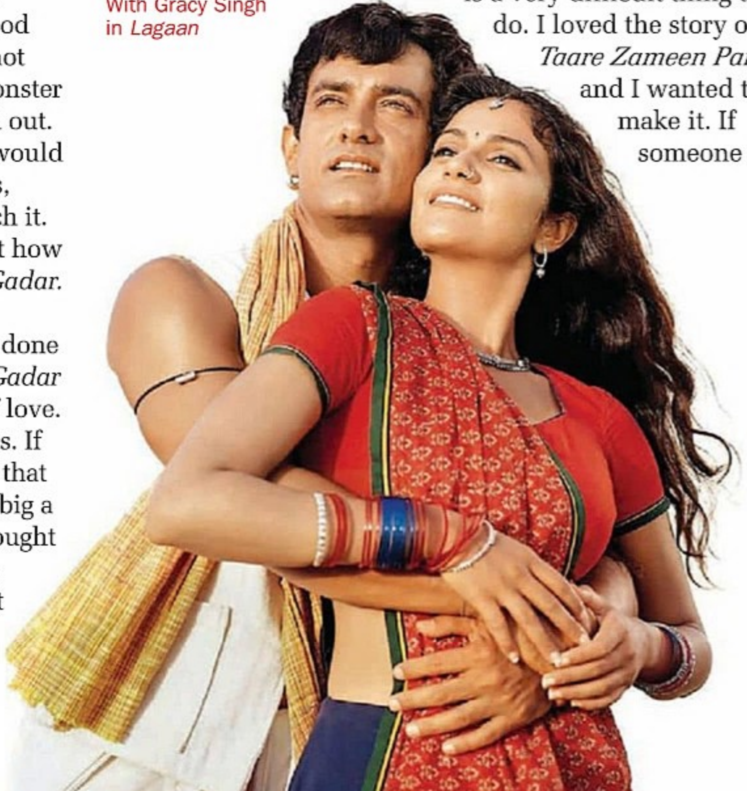
I have seen my father and my uncle make movies. My father was a very enthusiastic producer. But he didn't know how to do business so he never ended up making money. He made a film called *Locket,* which took eight years to complete. Then another film *Khoon Ki Pukaar* took three years. I have seen him go through a lot of financial crises. We used to often get calls with people saying we have given money and when are you returning it. My dad was in his 40s then. And one night, my mother found my dad searching for his graduation certificate to take up a job. Hence, I had decided that I'd never be a producer. I was happy being an actor. But when Ashutosh came to me with a script that I loved, I wondered who would produce this film. Ashu, unfortunately at that time, had not given successful films. No one would have given him a free rein. I felt if this film had to be made, I'd have to produce it. At present, I am making *Laal Singh Chaddha*, and only once I am done with this film will I go to the next. I am like a handloom worker, and my production house is like a small cottage industry. We liked the story of *Peepli Live*, *chalo* let's make it. Now how it would fare at the box office, we didn't know. We have a 100 percent record till today. We didn't lose money even on the documentary film that Swathy Chakravarthy directed for me, called *Rubaru Roshni*. It has been a great journey, and a great learning experience.

Lagaan **was released with** ***Gadar.*** **Did people tell you it was a wrong move to clash with such a big film?**

There was Anil Sharma, who is a successful director, and Sunny Deol, a huge star, so one was concerned. However, I always believed, and I still hold to that, and we have examples to prove that when two good films are released on the same day, they both do well. Sunny and I have coincidentally come together many times. *Dil* and *Ghayal* also came on the same day. I knew *Gadar's* story, and I told Ashu that the story was brilliant, its emotion is so good that it cannot

> “WHEN ASHUTOSH CAME TO ME WITH A SCRIPT THAT I LOVED, I WONDERED WHO WOULD PRODUCE THIS FILM. ASHU, UNFORTUNATELY AT THAT TIME, HAD NOT GIVEN SUCCESSFUL FILMS. **NO ONE WOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM A FREE REIN. I FELT IF THIS FILM HAD TO BE MADE, I'D HAVE TO PRODUCE IT**”

go wrong, and let's be prepared for a very good film. But what I was not prepared for was a monster of a film that it turned out. People from villages would come sitting on trucks, tractors, buses to watch it. Today, I wonder about how we lasted in front of *Gadar.* It was like a tsunami. *Lagaan* may not have done as much business as *Gadar* but it received a lot of love. Both are tentpole films. If someone had told me that *Gadar* wiould be this big a film, I would have thought twice about releasing *Lagaan* with it. I don't think even Sunny or Anil Sharma knew that it would be such a monster hit because these kinds of successes are very rare. But I don't remember anyone specifically telling me not to release it on the same day as *Gadar.*



→ With Gracy Singh in *Lagaan*

Would you be okay if someone wants to remake *Lagaan* today?

Why not? Ashutosh and I have already done it, and it will be boring for us to do it again. But if another filmmaker wants to make *Lagaan,* we will be happy to give them the rights. They will have their own *nazariya* to make it. I don't believe in being possessive about my film. *(Laughs)* I'd like to see who can play Bhuvan better than me.

What did the success do to you as a star, as an actor? Did it change the way you looked at stories?

For me, selecting stories always depended upon personal excitement. I have never tried to calculate how it will fare at the box office, which is a very difficult thing to do. I loved the story of *Taare Zameen Par* and I wanted to make it. If someone had to ask what business it would do, what was I supposed to answer? I loved the story of *Peepli Live* but if I had to think about the box office and then produce, then I wouldn't have produced it. When I did *Delhi Belly* in English language, how could I predict how many people in India would watch it? Nobody knew that *Taare Zameen Par* would eventually earn Rs 80 crore at that time. It was the second highest grosser that year. My primary responsibility as a filmmaker is to entertain, and within that if I get the opportunity to say something important then I jump at it. I also like the mad humour so that was one of the reasons to do *Delhi Belly*, there was no message in it.

Why do you think *Lagaan* is still relevant?

A few films like *Mughal-e-Azam, Mother India, Gunga Jumna, Sholay...* these are some of the classics. Why? Because they stand the test of time. But you can't plan such films, they just happen. K Asif wouldn't have known that people would watch his *Mughal-e-Azam* 70 years later. I always say that *Lagaan* is a journey film. It started as a journey, and remains a journey. In this journey, some joined in the early stage and some joined later on. It began with Ashutosh, then I joined him, A R Rahman, then the other actors, technicians came in, and the last ones to join was the audience. The journey of *Lagaan* is ongoing, I am still enjoying this journey, and hope it never ends. ■

home truths

RAKUL PREET SINGH GREW UP AS AN ARMY KID AND HENCE LED A PRETTY NOMADIC LIFE. SHE TELLS **ANALITA SETH** THAT HER GROWING-UP DAYS PREPARED HER FOR THE HUSTLE-AND-BUSTLE OF BEING AN ACTOR

As Robert Frost has said -- Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in. That's pretty much what the pretty Punjabi actress Rakul Preet Singh feels about home. She's been active both in the Hindi and in the South industries and has been living out of her valises for a while now. As her father was in the army, she had to move to a different place every three years. She grew up to be quite a detached individual because of that. The walls, the furniture, the surroundings don't translate into home for her. Home means the warmth of her mother's embrace, the strict discipline of her father and mischievous laughter of her younger brother. Incidentally, her last release, Sardar Ka Grandson, *revolved around an old woman's obsession with her home in Pakistan and how her grandson vows to transport it back to India. Working in the film made her feel nostalgic about her own grandparents. She could relate to their stories about pre-Partition days. Also, it brought back feelings about her own rootless childhood. Excerpts from an introspective interview where the actress looks back on the film and her own growing-up days with affection...*

What's the one thing about *Sardar Ka Grandson* that intrigued you the most?

My grandparents, both maternal and paternal, had come to India after the Partition. I've grown up with stories of that era. My paternal grandfather was sixteen years old when he crossed over to India so his entire schooling had taken place across the border. They used to tear up talking about how they had to leave their friends behind, leave their homes behind. They shared so many bitter-sweet memories about their past lives. He always cherished the dream to go back to his native village and visit his ancestral house at least once in his life. Unfortunately, we weren't able to fulfil that wish as my father was serving in the Indian Army and it was difficult to get a Pakistani visa. By the time my father retired, my grandfather was too old to travel. So when I heard the script, it felt like my grandparents' story. I couldn't take my grandfather to Pakistan but I felt doing this would make him happy. Unfortunately, we lost him around two years back when I started shooting for it. Hence, *Sardar Ka Grandson* was an emotional journey for me in so many ways.

Sardar Ka Grandson

> *Arjun is someone who brings in a lot with him. He is spontaneous and loves to improvise. For instance, in our first two scenes together, where we were having a lover's tiff, we both were improvising a lot*

Was there any scene in the film that reminded you of your own family?

That madness that abounds in any Punjabi family was captured beautifully in the film. They are a little loud, some are even messy, there's chaos, there's love and it's a big fat punjabi family. I think each one of us, not just me who has grown up in the Northern belt, will be able to associate with someone or the other in the film. They love, they fight but they all stick together. I think that's what every family is like.

How was it working with Arjun Kapoor?

Arjun is someone who brings in a lot with him. He is spontaneous and loves to improvise. For instance, in our first two scenes together, where we were having a lover's tiff, we both were improvising a lot. Of course, we had the actual dialogue to fall back on but decided to just go with the flow. It was a lot of fun to work with

> *My grandfather always cherished the dream to go back to his native village and visit his ancestral house at least once in his life. Unfortunately, we weren't able to fulfil that wish as my father was serving in the Indian Army and it was difficult to get a Pakistani visa*

PHOTOGRAPHS ESHAAN GIRI / FEMINA

him. He loves to make you laugh and keeps pulling everyone's legs. There were times when I had to tell him to stop because we were doing a serious scene.

What is your most cherished memory of shooting *Sardar Ka Grandson?*

There was never a dull moment during the entire schedule. One thing I'll never forget is driving that truck with the house on it. To go forward and then reverse in a small lane, it was insane. We were driving on the roads of Patiala and people were staring at us like we were aliens. That's something I'll never forget.

Do you wish the film had a theatrical release?

Yes. Definitely. The big screen has its own charm. Every emotion comes out grandly. But OTT is not bad, it serves as a great platform. The reach is so much more. Not just Indians, people across the globe can access your films. So both have their own positives and co-existence between mediums is the future.

Neena Gupta's character was in love with her old house in Lahore. Do you feel the same way about your own house in Delhi?

My parents have kept all my old toys in my old room at our house in Delhi. A lot of memories come rushing back when I see them -- how my younger brother and I would fight over them, how I would scare him… things you suddenly have a flashback of when you go back home. There is also this frame that my college friends hand painted and wrote

WHO WOULD DO TAKE WITH YOU FOR THE FOLLOWING ADVENTURE OR SPORT

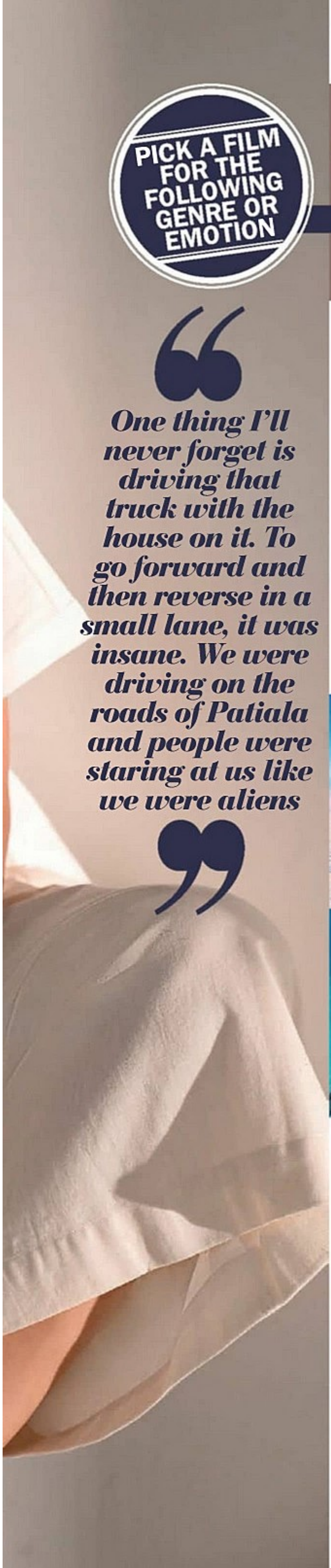
Go scuba diving with:
→ **SHRADDHA KAPOOR**

Play tennis with:
→ **SANIA MIRZA**

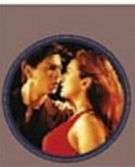
Enjoy a day at a yoga retreat with:
→ **SHILPA SHETTY**

Go on a deadly roller coaster with:
→ **SIDHARTH MALHOTRA**

Cliff dive with:
→ **FARHAN AKHTAR**



PICK A FILM FOR THE FOLLOWING GENRE OR EMOTION



Sad: ***KAL HO NAA HO***

Sci-fi: ***INTERSTELLAR***

Happy: ***ZINDAGI NA MILEGI DOBARA***

Action: ***TOMB RAIDER AND WONDER WOMAN***

Family drama: ***DILWALE DULHANIA LE JAYENGE***

Horror: ***CONJURING***

Gets you laughing: ***HERA PHERI***

> ***One thing I'll never forget is driving that truck with the house on it. To go forward and then reverse in a small lane, it was insane. We were driving on the roads of Patiala and people were staring at us like we were aliens***

messages on in 2009 for my birthday. We were a group of five so my four friends had made that and it's still there in my room. Whenever I look at it, it's hard to believe it's been eleven years since I've been away. It'll always remain close to my heart. More than physical memorabilia, I like to keep memories in my mind. I'm a little old school like that. In today's day and age, we have forgotten to live in the present. We are constantly trying to capture the moment and forget to actually make memories. So I prefer to absorb the present rather than click pictures or hold onto things.

Did the moving around that came with your father's profession ever take a toll on you?

It does affect you but that was our normal. Earlier, if someone told me they lived in the same place for a decade, I used to find that strange as we moved houses every two-three years. If someone told me they studied in the same school all their lives, I thought that was quite boring. Because they'd only have one set of friends, one set of memories. I've changed ten schools. I do remember this one time, when I was in the fourth standard and we were posted in Jalandhar -- it's the age you just start making friends. My father got transferred to Maharashtra within a year and I cried a lot. I found it so unfair because we would at least stay two to three years at one station. Dad told me we were going to Deolali. To make me happy he said there's going to be paragliding there so I calmed down. I'm grateful for the exposure we got because of the nature of his job.

Speaking of family, if there ever were to be a film on your life, who would you want to see play your parents and brother?

We'll keep everyone as it is and do something like *Masaba Masaba*. It'll be a lot of fun.

Has anyone from your family ever expressed an interest in acting?

My younger brother Aman Preet Singh is starting out as an actor. My family has no clue about what my job entails. He'll finally know how easy or difficult the job is.

What do you like and dislike about virtual interactions during the lockdown?

I obviously miss meeting people in person. It's nice to touch base with people on a one-on-one level. But it's convenient, you're sitting at home, probably in your pyjamas, doing a video call and you're comfortable. Your makeup can be easy, you save time but yes, you miss the real deal.

You also started a series on your social media, *Chronicles of Rakul*. When did you decide to share the adventurous side of your life?

I wasn't planning on it but I have been a believer of the fact that social media is for people to get to know the real you. There is so much that you can tell them besides sharing your pictures. About life, who you really are, how you deal with the highs and the lows. So *Chronicles of Rakul* was a way to show people that my life isn't just tied to my profession. I'm not just an actor but also an adventurous girl who loves to explore the outdoors. You are literally nothing when you're out in nature. Our existence is minuscule and we should not be stressing about anything in life. We are negligible on the face of this planet. ■

I'm an actor. I can romance a mannequin if my director asks me to. Basically what we do comes from within. I need to tap into my own space to deliver. That's what being a professional is all about

PHOTOGRAPHS: KEEGAN CRASTO/GRAZIA INDIA.

All the colours in the rainbow

IN A CANDID CHAT, **NUSHRRATT BHARUCCHA** REVEALS TO **VEDANSHI PATHAK** WHY SHE LOVES DIFFERENTLY-HUED CHARACTERS

Nushrratt Bharuccha made a name for herself with Luv Ranjan's *Pyaar Ka Punchnama* (2011) and thanks to its success she landed grey-shaded roles in films like *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2* (2015) and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* (2018). The actress changed tracks with *Dream Girl* (2019) and *Chhalaang* (2019), where she played positive characters. With *Ajeeb Daastaans* (2021), she was back to playing a twisted character. Her role as a maid in the Raj Mehta directed segment got much appreciated. She says she had much fun on the sets even though it was a dark film. And adds the director and his entire team had a wacky sense of humour. "My co-star, Abhishek Banerjee, is a prankster as well. There were times the shooting got delayed because I couldn't get into my character as I was laughing so much. We all used to dine out together after pack-up. It was amazing." She mentions she has no qualms about playing dark or difficult characters because they're much more fun. And they provide her the leeway to do more as an actor. "I like dwelling in those spaces where you don't know why a character did a certain thing. You want to ask 'why'. You want to understand their motives. My characters in *Dream Girl* or *Chhalaang* were plain vanilla characters compared to what I've done earlier or even what I did in *Ajeeb Daastaans*. Why just settle for vanilla when there are so many other flavours," she asserts.

She loved Minal, her character from *Ajeeb Daastaans* because it was full of ambiguities. Minal stole money or lingerie but she wasn't a thief. Or rather, in her eyes she wasn't a thief but someone from the margins trying to get by through whatever means possible. Nushrratt says when you play such characters, you begin by not judging them. "She's about to join a new house as a maid. She knows that the man who owns the house has designs on her. *'Kya kar lega, 3-4 ghanta dekh lega na aur uski biwi hain ghar pe aur karr bhi kya sakta hai'* (What'll he do. He can only stare at me for 3-4 hours. His wife is at home, what else can he do?) This one line shows both her strength and vulnerability. And it's all too real because that's the kind of society we live in." She loved Inayat Verma, the little chipmunk who played her sassy younger sister in the film and says she hasn't met a more sorted person. The child never used to get bothered by anything and coped with delays and night shifts with the calm of a zen master. Inayat even used to cue in Nushrratt's lines if she misstepped. "I've never seen a person like her. Conversing with her felt like one's talking to a person

Ram Setu

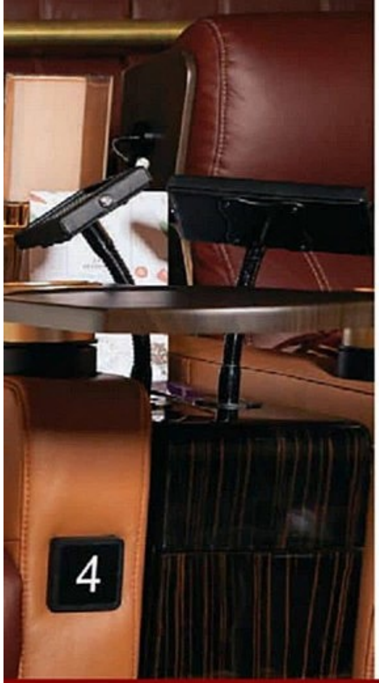
> **There's never a dull moment when Akshay sir is on the sets. He's always cracking jokes and making sure everyone around him is relaxed. He takes care of everyone on the sets. His team carries enough food to feed everyone so we were always munching on something**

I like dwelling in those spaces where you don't know why a character did a certain thing. You want to ask 'why'. You want to understand their motives. My characters in *Dream Girl* or *Chhalaang* were plain vanilla characters compared to what I've done earlier

closer to one's age than a much younger person. I spent much time with her and her parents and it was an enriching experience. I hope she doesn't change. If she continues on her journey she might become one of our top stars one day."

Nushrratt is excited about her forthcoming horror film *Chhorii* directed by Vishal Furia, who is redeveloping his own Marathi hit *Lapachhapi* (2017) into Hindi. They've got Crypt TV on board as producer so one can be sure it's going to see international distribution. It's a horror film with a message and contains plenty of humour as well. A major portion of the film was shot during the pandemic. "We were shooting from November to December last year in Bhopal. Nobody was allowed without PPE kits, masks or gloves. There was a constant rapid check every day. We were all in one quarantine hotel. We took every precaution and shot for 28 days with zero COVID-19 cases." Nushrratt plays an eight months pregnant woman in the film. It was a new experience for her as she had no parallels to draw upon and was constantly asking her pregnant friends about the experience to get into the mindscape of her character. She got so involved with her character that like an actual pregnant woman started getting emotional fluctuations. Once, she broke down in the middle of a scene and started crying. "I wasn't required to cry in the scene so the ADs came to me and told me the director had said cut and I should stop acting. The cameraman noticed something was amiss and he called the director, who was reviewing the scene on the monitor. My director came running and seeing my condition he ordered everyone off the set and just let me cry privately. He understood that I needed to let it all out at that time."

The talk veers to *Ram Setu*. The big budget film has Akshay Kumar and Jacqueline Fernandez as her co-stars. It's the biggest film she has signed as yet and hence she's obviously over the moon about it. Akshay is said to be a stickler for timelines and also a fitness freak. He's also said to be quite a jovial



person on the sets and Nushrratt agrees he's all that and more. “There's never a dull moment when Akshay sir is on the sets. He's always cracking jokes and making sure everyone around him is relaxed. He takes care of everyone on the sets. His team carries enough food to feed everyone so we were always munching on something. I was apprehensive initially about working with him but the relaxed atmosphere on the sets helped me deliver my best,” she adds. She had met Jacqueline during an awards function and the two girls had immediately bonded. Nushrratt remembers using different Instagram filters with Jacqueline and clicking all sorts of crazy selfies with her. So there was a connection with her from before. “She's one of those absolute rare, genuine, open hearted, loving souls who made me feel so comfortable. I was so welcomed and so loved while shooting with her. Hands down she is my favourite person. Definitely a major crush, I love her,” gushes Nushrratt. It's not as if she needs to be welcomed on every set. While Nushrratt agrees that a fun atmosphere leads to better takes, she says she can emote next to a cardboard cutout if need be. “I'm an actor. I can romance a mannequin if my director asks me to. Basically what we do comes from within. I need to tap into my own space to deliver. That's what being a professional is all about.”

Jacqueline is one of those absolute rare, genuine, open hearted, loving souls who made me feel so comfortable. I was so welcomed and so loved while shooting with her. Hands down she is my favourite person. Definitely a major crush, I love her

With Hansal Mehta and Rajkummar Rao on the sets of *Chhalaang*

Dream Girl

Akshay Kumar tested positive for COVID-19 and everyone associated with him had to self-quarantine. Nushrratt wasn't on the sets when that happened but felt bad for the producers as they had to shut everything down. Then, the second phase of lockdown happened and the shooting was stalled again. It remains stalled as we speak. She's glad that Akshay made it back home safe and is waiting for the curbs to be lifted so that the shooting can start again. “The unit had taken so many precautions. Everybody had to take the COVID-19 test before coming to the shoot. Everybody was wearing masks and face shields. And only actors were allowed to take them off, that too when the camera was rolling. So I don't know how it happened,” she muses. “I trust the makers completely and will report on the sets whenever they need me,” she comments.

To minimise their losses, filmmakers have taken to releasing their films on OTT. Nushrratt isn't bothered by this fact at all. Her stance is that the film should get to reach the audience. It doesn't matter if it's in the traditional way through theatres or through OTT platforms. “We wouldn't have been able to release our films at all if these platforms weren't in existence. I'd rather put my stuff out there rather than have it gathering dust somewhere. It's a new lease of life,” she reflects. A decade in the industry and she still gets nervous when her film is nearing its release. She starts hyperventilating majorly. And she also doesn't like to go to preview screenings. “I've never seen a film of mine before its release. I only watch my own portions even while dubbing. I catch it after three-four days of release. I don't know how others can be so cool about it all,” she wonders. And she isn't comfortable doing publicity interviews either. “Because I'm a nervous wreck during those days. So it's hard to meet the press and answer all those questions. I'd rather dig a hole somewhere and hide. I joke with my producers that I'd rather do the publicity interviews after a film's release and not before,” she adds with a grin.

My last question is about her relationship status. She's been linked by the press to director Luv Ranjan, though both of them have denied any romantic angle. Nusrratt says she's very much single and ready to mingle. “I've a legit question -- where are the men? I've been ready to be in a relationship for a long time but it doesn't seem to happen. I'd love someone to sweep me off my feet.”

Amen to that! ■

Who the f★★★ is Alice?

TILLOTAMA SHOME TALKS TO **RAGHUVENDRA SINGH** ABOUT BEING ONE OF THE BEST, AND LEAST KNOWN ACTORS IN THE COUNTRY

Tillotama Shome started life in the movies as a maid named Alice in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001). She recently won the Filmfare Critics' Best Actor Award for *Sir* (2020), where too, she coincidentally played a maid. In these two decades between her first and her most recent release, she has made a name for herself internationally as an actor who can be relied upon to stand and deliver. Her best film is said to be *Qissa* (2013) a Punjabi film where she's brought up as a boy by her father (played by the late Irrfan Khan), because the father wanted a boy to continue his lineage. Both Irrfan and she are at their best in the film, which has been bypassed by the mainstream audience. This is vastly true of most of her films. She finds it ironic that no one has seen her films in India but over the years has made her peace with the fact. Apart from films, she has extensively done theatre, both in India and abroad. She's even taught acting to hardened convicts in New York's infamous Rikers Island correctional centre. She's married to Kunal Ross, who happens to be Jaya Bachchan's nephew. Her destination wedding in Goa was attended by the entire Bachchan clan. In fact, she got married on March 29, 2015 and the couple brought in their anniversary on the night of the Filmfare Awards with a double celebration. Presenting excerpts from a free-flowing interview with the *hatke* actor...

YOU WERE NOMINATED AT *FILMFARE* IN THE BEST ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE (FEMALE) CATEGORY FOR *A DEATH IN A GUNJ* IN 2017. WERE YOU HOPING TO BRING THE BLACK LADY HOME BACK THEN?

It was the first time I was invited to *Filmfare,* besides the nomination and that too for my dear friend's (Konkona Sen Sharma) directorial debut. So there was already a lot to celebrate. Mrs Jaya Bachchan invited all the women who were nominated for *Filmfare* to her home for a meal. It was such a warm gesture and the evening was replete with a sense of camaraderie that I had missed, doing the kind of films I had done.

> **“I encountered an anxiety attack for the first time in Pune in the middle of the lockdown a year ago. It is real. I understood first hand what it feels like for your heart to beat so loud as if it will shatter your ribs”**

> “I felt happy I could share this news with my beloved parents... The win was reported in various newspapers and their friends from ages ago got in touch with them and it became a reason to catch up and celebrate their friendship”

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE OF WINNING YOUR FIRST FILMFARE AWARD FOR *SIR*?

I felt delighted to see actors I admire in the room. I felt grateful to be included in their midst. I missed the team of *Sir,* especially our director Rohena Gera and my co-conspirators Vivek Gomber and Geetanjali Kulkarni. Most of all I felt happy, I could share this news with my beloved parents who've been walking through a storm with quiet dignity and strength. The win was reported in various newspapers and their friends from ages ago got in touch with them and it became a reason to catch up and celebrate their friendship. I have never won a *Filmfare,* so this happening in the midst of a personal and universal crisis must have some meaning. What I do going forward becomes doubly significant.

Monsoon Wedding

> **"The first recognition of being drawn to performance was seeing Piyush Mishra do a one-man-show. That began my journey on stage. On the set of *Monsoon Wedding*, I realised how comfortable I felt in front of the camera"**

With Director Anup Singh on the sets of *Qissa*

YOUR MOTHER IS BATTLING CANCER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PANDEMIC. HOW TOUGH IS THIS FOR YOU?

Not tougher than it is for her. She is always up to mischief and smiling and laughing through everything. She is very cool. Lots of people say I look like her, but I really want to be like her. Many strangers have helped us, and I am so grateful. Many friends and comrades have made offers that are plain magnanimous. Directors and colleagues have been incredibly supportive. I am very blessed.

YOU SPOKE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN ONE OF YOUR INTERVIEWS...

I encountered an anxiety attack for the first time in Pune in the middle of the lockdown a year ago. It is real. I understood first hand what it feels like for your heart to beat so loud as if it will shatter your ribs. There are many people who have lived with this for years. To think a movie, a holiday, a massage should fix it is naive. We need to be sensitive even if this is not our reality.

YOU TOOK UP THEATRE AS A WAY TO OVERCOME YOUR STAMMER?

Yes, theatre was therapeutic for me. My stammer did not dampen my spirit largely because my parents normalised it and made no issue of it. I thank my stars for having such progressive parents.

HOW DID YOU MAKE YOUR JOURNEY TO FILMS?

I was born in Kolkata, but am an Indian Air Force kid who travelled to a new place every few years, learnt a new language and forgot the one before. The first recognition of being drawn to performance was seeing Piyush Mishra do a one-man-show. That began my journey on stage. On the set of *Monsoon Wedding*, I realised how comfortable I felt in front of the camera (of course Declan Quinn was the DOP and doing his magic). Unlike the live audience on stage, the camera was like a friend who saw everything that you felt and registered the slightest twitch.

TWO DECADES IN CINEMA IS A LONG TIME. WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS MILESTONE?

I feel robust and alive. I had the most fantastic experience as an actor in *Monsoon Wedding*. Little did I know then that this would be precious nostalgia soon after. The move to digital created so much debate and discussion but one adapts, evolves and begins to unlearn and learn again. I feel like that about witnessing change in so many other aspects too. Gotta be flexible or you will snap.

NOW, THANKS TO THE OTT PLATFORMS WE'RE WITNESSING A SURGE IN THE AUDIENCE WATCHING NICHE CINEMA. EARLIER, A LOT OF GOOD FILMS WENT UNNOTICED. DID THAT MAKE YOU ANGRY?

Yes, yes, yes. I was often angry and often upset. No matter how hard I worked, no one in my own country watched my films, so they didn't give me work. I got invited to *Filmfare*

> **There was no such one film that changed my life overnight. It was a slow process of learning and discovery. But some of the films I did changed me in profound ways. Alice in *Monsoon Wedding* and Kanwar in *Qissa* were big personal milestones**

On Irrfan Khan

Qissa

Please share your memories of working with Irrfan Khan...

I can perhaps share something he told me when we were shooting *Angrezi Medium*, that has stuck and remained.

(During a shooting break...)

IRRFAN (IK): Don't cry about not having work, we have all gone through that. No one likes tragedy queens. You don't have to understand everything in a script. And when you find something inexplicable, enjoy the unknown. It rarely happens.

IK: You look really happy, are you still with your husband?

Tillotama Shome (TS): Yes still with him

IK: Why are you so happy then?

Me: I guess I took your advice. No one likes tragedy queens.

IK: So say why are you so happy?

Me: I don't know Irrfan. Mom got diagnosed with cancer and....

IK: Aah! No wonder you are so happy. It all makes sense now. I'm happy too...

(Cut here as director Homi Adajania calls us for a shot)

(Resume...)

IK: Please put on some weight. Don't diet. I have told you many times you are too thin.

TS: So are you. And I have not mentioned it once. And I am not on a diet...

Angrezi Medium

> **No matter how hard I worked, no one in my own country watched my films, so they didn't give me work. I got invited to *Filmfare* for the first time thanks to Konkona's film *A Death In The Gunj*. I was so happy to just be counted amongst the industry that I was a part of**

With Konkona Sen Sharma on the sets of *A Death In The Gunj*

Sir

Shanghai

for the first time thanks to Konkona's film *A Death In The Gunj*. I was so happy to just be counted amongst the industry that I was a part of. But anger is a funny thing -- useless, unless you use it to propel yourself.

YOU BAGGED *SHANGHAI* BY CALLING UP DIBAKAR BANERJEE AND TELLING HIM YOU WANTED TO WORK WITH HIM?

(Laughs) I have told many directors that I want to work with them. Hansal Mehta, Shoojit Sircar, Vasan Bala, Abhishek Chaubey, Arati Kadav, Ram Madhvani, Anurag Kashyap... Dibakar actually took it seriously. And I am glad for it. I messaged him (like a few others) at regular intervals (as my sense of propriety allowed me to) reminding him of my desire to work with him. Maybe I should write to him again? What do you think?

AT ANY POINT, DID THE JOURNEY BECOME A TAD DIFFICULT? DID YOU EVER FEEL UNSATISFIED WITH THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING?

Many times. It was often small parts in big films that one had to fight hard and long for. But it's alright, that is normal and part of the drill. Nothing to complain about.

WHAT MAKES YOU BELIEVE IN OUR CINEMA AND WHERE OUR CONTENT IS HEADING IN BOLLYWOOD?

I have no idea where we are heading, such predictions are not for me to make. In recent times I am hugely inspired by some mainstream Bollywood voices backing such diverse and wonderful stories. For example, Anushka Sharma. What she and her company have achieved is hugely inspiring. She is such a rockstar.

YOU ALMOST MAKE EVERY PERFORMANCE LOOK SO EFFORTLESS. HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANY PERFORMANCE OF YOURS WHICH HAS BEEN DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING FOR YOU?

Each part was difficult and challenging in different ways. And if it looks

> **In recent times, I am hugely inspired by some mainstream Bollywood voices backing such diverse and wonderful stories. For example, Anushka Sharma. What she and her company have achieved is hugely inspiring**

effortless it's because the director and the entire post production team has worked really hard to edit the effort out.

WHAT ROLE OR FILM WAS THE CHANGING POINT IN YOUR CAREER?

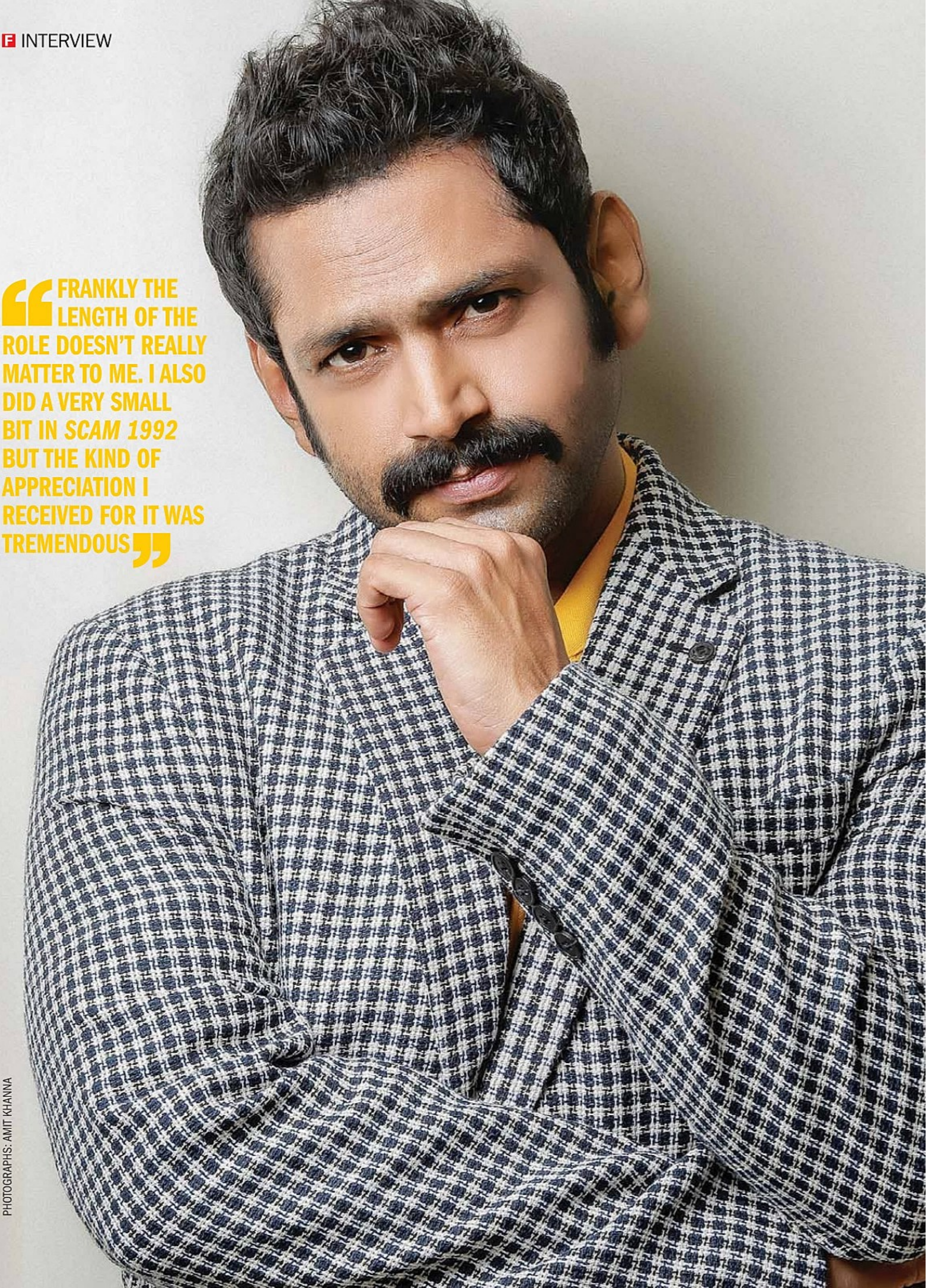
There was no such one film that changed my life overnight. It was a slow process of learning and discovery. But some of the films I did, changed me in profound ways. Alice in *Monsoon Wedding* and Kanwar in *Qissa* were big personal milestones. Ratna in *Sir* reached such a large audience thanks to Netflix that all of us in the team were absolutely overwhelmed and unprepared for this kind of love.

WHEN YOU WERE OFFERED *SIR*, WHAT WAS THAT ONE THING THAT MADE YOU SAY YES TO THE FILM INSTANTLY?

The script made me uncomfortable in strange ways. That was the clincher. Also it's not very often that you get offered to play a layered protagonist.

HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN PEOPLE CALL YOU ALICE. DID YOU EVER IMAGINE THAT EVEN AFTER SEVERAL YEARS PEOPLE WOULD STILL CALL YOU THAT?

I want to say 'Who the F*** is Alice' but instead I thank them for bringing my childhood back. *(Laughs)* No comparison AT ALL, but when *Monsoon Wedding* premiered at Venice, at one party Mira very kindly introduced me to Ben Kingsley. Mira says to me "And I want you to meet Gandhi". And I distinctly remember the expression on his face -- always Gandhi! What amazes me is the love people still have for Mira's film. And I am glad I got so much love for Alice and was part of Mira's Universe. I had/have a massive crush on her. ■



"FRANKLY THE LENGTH OF THE ROLE DOESN'T REALLY MATTER TO ME. I ALSO DID A VERY SMALL BIT IN *SCAM 1992* BUT THE KIND OF APPRECIATION I RECEIVED FOR IT WAS TREMENDOUS"

PHOTOGRAPHS: AMIT KHANNA

ANOTHER THROW OF DICE...

RAGHUVENDRA SINGH chats with SHARIB HASHMI, who's enjoying a second innings of sorts, thanks to *The Family Man* and its sequel

Sharib Hashmi is the son of noted film journalist Z A Johar. He remembers attending the premieres of *Parinda* and *Saajan* as a kid. The glamour and the stardom felt magical to him. That's when he decided to become an actor. After trying his hand at writing for TV, he caught a break when Danny Boyle selected him for a small role in *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). That led to him being cast as one of the leads in the indie film *Filmistan* (2012). He thought he had made it big but sadly most of the films he signed afterwards failed to take off. The web series *The Family Man* and its sequel proved to be a second chance for him. He plays Talpade, who is a Watson of sorts to Manoj Bajpayee's Holmes in the thriller. Presenting a straight-from-the-heart interview with the dynamic actor.

***The Family Man 2* has turned out to be better than the first part...**

I can't describe what I'm feeling right now. I feel proud and fortunate to be an integral part of such an amazing show. The audience's appreciation and love for the second season is unbelievable. I celebrated by binge watching the series with family and friends.

This is the first time such kind of success has come your way...

I'm on cloud nine right now. I won't deny I had huge expectations from the second season. But the love and appreciation I'm receiving has gone way beyond my expectations. And I can't thank Raj and DK and Mukesh Chhabra enough for casting me as JK Talpade.

Has this success changed anything in your personal life?

It hasn't changed anything in my personal life. But yes I'm getting more interesting offers post the success and I'm enjoying this phase.

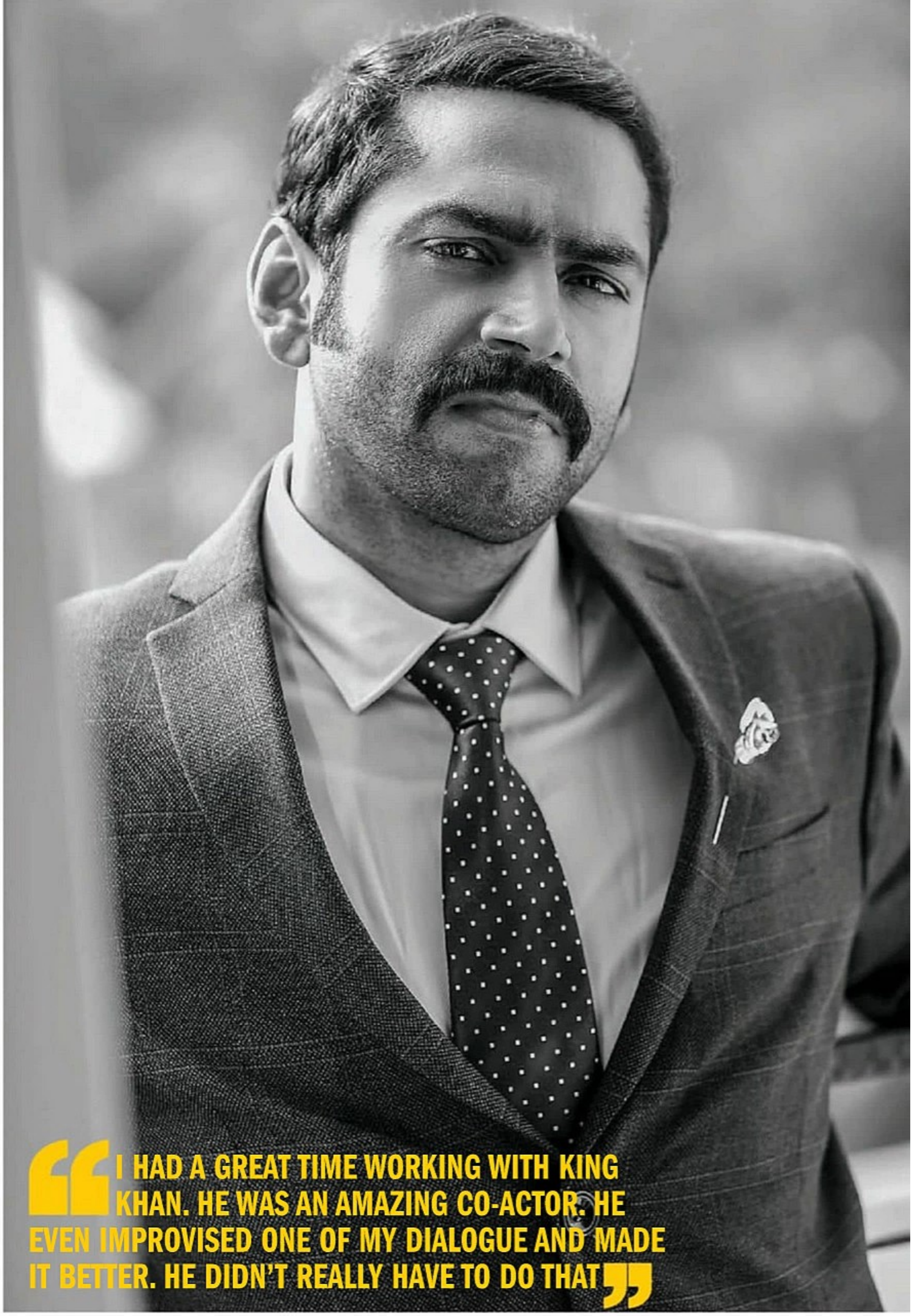
Post the success of *The Family Man 2*, you must be looking for bigger and better roles.

Who wouldn't like bigger and meatier parts? I have done main leads in the past as well. Frankly, the length of the role doesn't really matter to me. I also did a very small bit in *Scam 1992* but the kind of appreciation I received for it was tremendous. Similarly with *Pagglait.* I'm happy even to do a one-scene part, if it gives me scope to perform and do something different.

You have a 14-year-old son... how's he reacting to your success?
He doesn't think much about it. And the newly-turned teenager has enough on his plate already like studies, hormonal changes, teen troubles than to think of his dad's success. In fact, he gets a little awkward when a fan approaches me for a selfie. But I know one thing that he's really proud of his father.

What made you select the role in the first place when the series was offered to you?
Well I didn't choose the series. The series chose me. I auditioned for the part. And I think I did a fairly good job in my audition. And I prayed hard that I would get this part. Somewhere inside I had a strong intuition that if I get selected in *The Family Man,* things might change. But when I didn't receive any call for two weeks, I thought I'd lost out on this beautiful opportunity as well. But thankfully I received a call from Raj and DK after a while. They loved my audition and they offered me the part and things did change for me when the first season started streaming. And my intuition was proven right.

What is your take on the OTT platforms?
If I talk about myself, it revived my career in a big way. After *Filmistaan* (2012), I thought I had arrived and I wouldn't have to worry about getting work anymore. And I did sign a few very interesting projects but somehow things didn't materialise. Some of the films got stuck mid-way. Some never took off. I did a few indie movies and they never saw the light of day. And people thought I'd vanished after *Filmistaan.* Thanks to *The Family Man* people took notice of me again. It was followed by *Asur* and *Scam.* I would say OTT completely changed things for me. And I feel really happy that many actors whom I have admired watching in the past have received immense popularity thanks to OTT. Jaideep Ahlawat, Divyendu Sharma, Abhishek Bannerjee, Rajesh



> I HAD A GREAT TIME WORKING WITH KING KHAN. HE WAS AN AMAZING CO-ACTOR. HE EVEN IMPROVISED ONE OF MY DIALOGUE AND MADE IT BETTER. HE DIDN'T REALLY HAVE TO DO THAT

The Family Man

> **WORKING WITH MANOJ BAJPAYEE WAS LIKE GOING TO A FILM SCHOOL EVERY DAY. HE'S CONSTANTLY THINKING HOW TO BETTER THE SCENE, AND EVERY NEW TAKE HAS SOME OR THE OTHER MAGIC TO OFFER. I ENVY HIS DISCIPLINE AND DEDICATION**

Tailang, Rasika Duggal, Shreya Dhanwantary have all found their niche here. Also the format of the OTT is such that it allows other characters to flourish as well and not just the protagonists. The duration of a movie is two or max two and a half hours whereas a series is 7-8 hours long and you have ample time to establish other characters as well, which gives them enough scope to perform. So yes I'm really glad that this OTT boom happened in India.

You started off as a writer for TV...

(Laughs) Though as a kid I wanted to become a hero, when I grew up I didn't grow big enough. I was just 5'4. And I thought I was too short to grab a hero's part. I gave up my desire to become a star and started as an assistant director in a film called *Hum Tumpe Marte Hain* (1999) starring Govinda and Urmila Matondkar. After that I shifted to writing non-fiction shows. A friend of mine, Rajul Mishra, asked me to help him in writing a VJ script for Rageshwari Loomba. And he really liked what I did and I ended up writing full episodes along with him. I slowly became a non-fiction writer. I worked in MTV for four years as their in-house writer. And then for other channels as well. I got married, had a kid and was quite content with the way my life and career was progressing.

How did the switch happen from writing to acting...

I did *Slumdog Millionaire* when I was still working as a writer. An ex-colleague from my MTV days, Swapnil Kore was the assistant casting director of *Slumdog* and he called me to test for a tiny part. When I went to audition for that role, Danny Boyle was also present. In fact he took my audition and gave me cues for the other character. I improvised a line and Danny Boyle laughed really hard. I was selected for that part. And when I went to the sets and read the script, the line I improvised was there in the script. He told me, "We have incorporated your line in the script and you're even part of the script now". This acknowledgment was huge for me. I didn't do anything extraordinary Every actor improvises. But the way Danny Boyle said those things, it was unreal. I was nobody in front of him. I just had a one-page part in the film, but the respect and encouragement he gave me was immense.

How many auditions have you given in your initial days as an actor?

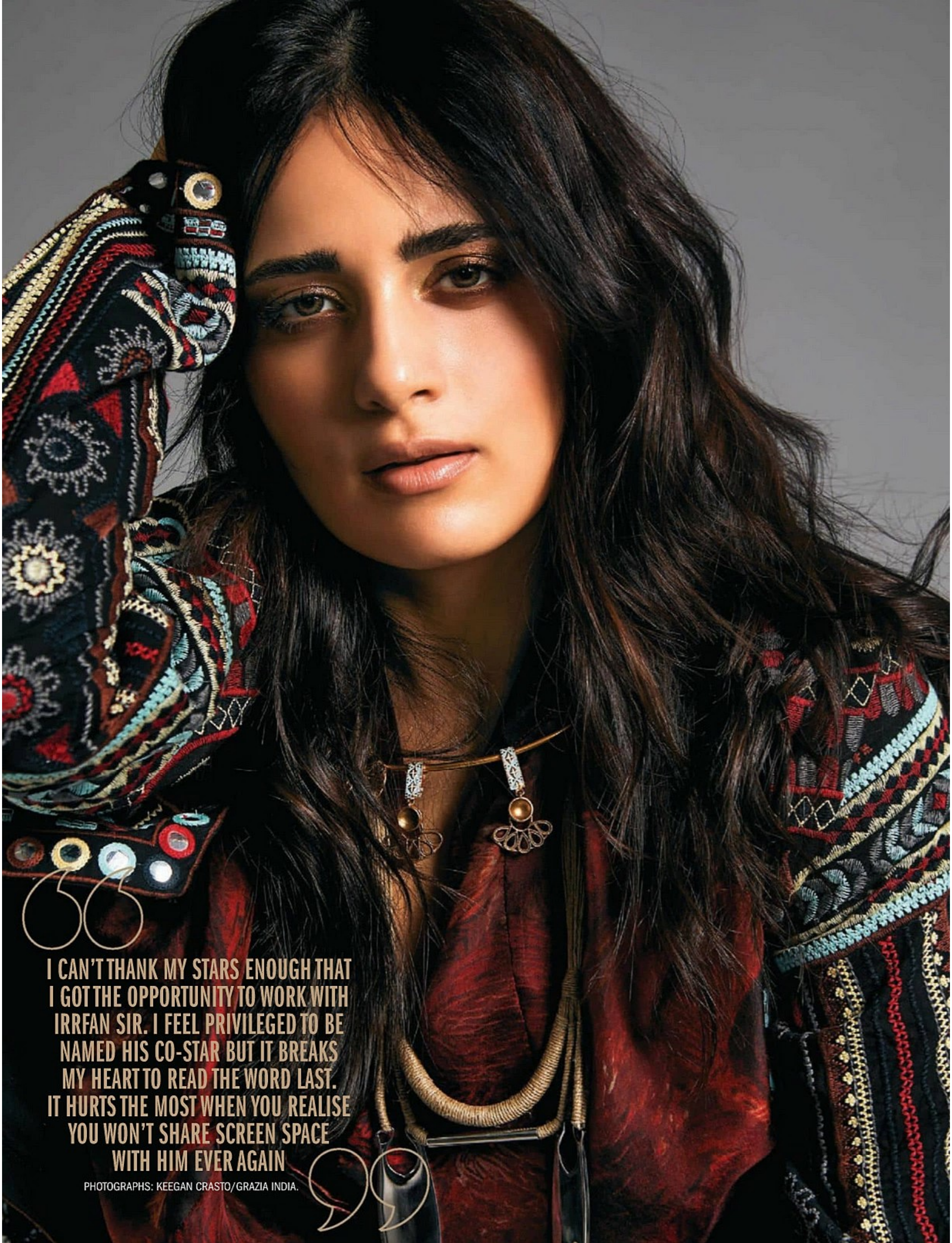
I have lost count of the number of auditions I have given. And I actually enjoy the process of auditions. I think audition actors *ka riyaaz hai*. We get to imagine and perform different characters and hone our skills. In fact, I have learnt a lot during that phase. The hard part was the rejections. We face so many rejections on a daily basis that sometimes it becomes difficult to keep a positive approach. But I managed to remain positive and you get so thick skinned after a point of time that it doesn't bother you much.

You've worked with Shah Rukh in *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*...

Though Sharib Hashmi the actor, was quite comfortable performing in front of the camera, Sharib Hashmi the person was mostly awestruck and shy on the sets of *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* (2012) with such stalwarts like Yash Chopra, Aditya Chopra, Anil Mehta, Sharmishta Roy, Katrina Kaif, Anushka Sharma and of course the biggest superstar Shah Rukh Khan around. I had a great time working with King Khan. He is an amazing co-actor. He even improvised one of my dialogue and made it better. He didn't really have to do that. That was really sweet of him. I wish and hope I get to work with him in future as well and get to learn more from him. Maybe this time around I won't be shy.

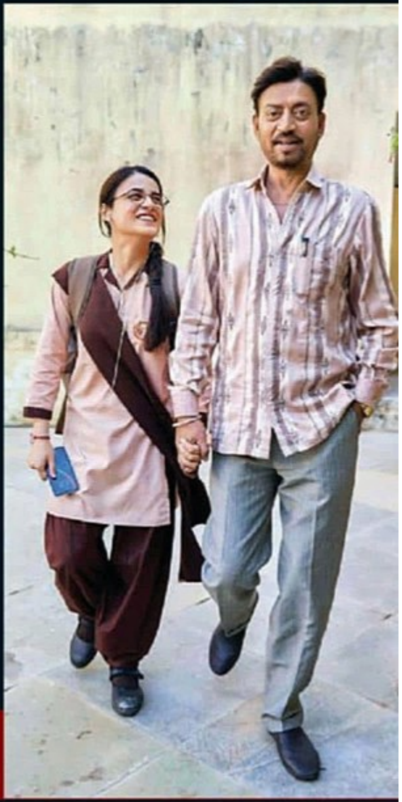
You seem to have developed a real-life friendship with Manoj Bajpayee.

We clicked on the first day itself. And the chemistry on-screen as well as off-screen kept growing with each passing day. Working with him was like going to a film school every day. He's constantly thinking how to better the scene, and every new take has some or the other magic to offer. I envy his discipline and dedication and I want to imbibe so many of his qualities. His easy nature, the way he conducts himself off screen. The way he balances his family and career so beautifully. I hope to work with him on all his projects in future. ■



> I CAN'T THANK MY STARS ENOUGH THAT I GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH IRRFAN SIR. I FEEL PRIVILEGED TO BE NAMED HIS CO-STAR BUT IT BREAKS MY HEART TO READ THE WORD LAST. IT HURTS THE MOST WHEN YOU REALISE YOU WON'T SHARE SCREEN SPACE WITH HIM EVER AGAIN

PHOTOGRAPHS: KEEGAN CRASTO/GRAZIA INDIA.



MEMORIES OF A GIANT

RADHIKA MADAN, WHO PLAYED HIS DAUGHTER IN *ANGREZI MEDIUM,* SHARES HER RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LATE IRRFAN KHAN WITH **VEDANSHI PATHAK**

Irrfan Khan was one of those actors who could make each role his own. His expressions flowed like water as he essayed each facet of his character in a film. Believability is the biggest asset of an actor and Irrfan made you believe the person you're watching on screen was someone you've known your entire life. He was an actors' actor in the sense that his colleagues were as much in awe of him as was the audience. Being with him on the sets was a learning process. He was reaching his peak both in Bollywood and in the international arena when the cruel hand of death snatched him away from us last year. One of the people who keenly felt the loss was his screen daughter Radhika Madan. Radhika had acted with Irrfan in his last released film *Angrezi Medium* (2020). The film was a spiritual successor to the 2017 hit *Hindi Medium* and revolved around the father-daughter bond depicted by Irrfan and Radhika. He was said to be in constant pain while filming the project and yet none of that comes across on screen. The actress shares personal glimpses of the great Irrfan Khan in an all-heart interview

> I STILL HAVEN'T FATHOMED THE FACT THAT HE (IRRFAN) IS NOT WITH US ANYMORE. I THINK THERE'S A PART OF ME THAT STILL DOESN'T ACCEPT THAT. I AM JUST BEING VERY HONEST HERE, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK THAT HE'S NOT THERE BECAUSE HE'S ALIVE IN THE WORK THAT HE'S DONE

A year has passed since Irrfan's demise...
I still haven't fathomed the fact that he is not with us anymore. I think there's a part of me that still doesn't accept that. I am just being honest here, I don't even want to think that he's not there because he's alive in the work he's done. If I miss him I just re-watch all the beautiful films that he was a part of and how he inspired every actor of our generation.

You played his daughter in *Angrezi Medium* and were one of the last actors to have worked with him.
Angrezi Medium was a special film. When I started shooting for it I thought I'd talk to him so much, grasp everything that I can because I have this opportunity. But we were told he doesn't have a lot of energy as he was undergoing chemotherapy during that time. We used to work for 5-6 hours every day and I could see he was conserving his energy. I think we just spoke in silence. Silences that were more powerful than words, as just by observing him I was able to learn so much from him. The way he used to treat people on the sets, his co-actors, the technicians, even the lightmen and spotboys was humbling. I'm a rookie and yet he treated me like an equal. Watching him, I learnt that there were so many different ways one can approach a scene. It was like watching a master craftsman, a master magician at work. He taught through his work and I was silently absorbing the magic. It's not something tangible. One can't put a name to what I felt, what I experienced but I know I've grown richer because of it. He was in pain but that pain never hindered a scene. He was keeping it at bay by sheer will power. When the camera was on, he was just his character. That was a powerful thing to witness.

How does it feel to be his last co-star?
It's a very bitter-sweet feeling, I don't like the word last. I just want to see him again and again and again, he was so brilliant. I just don't want to attest to the fact that he's not there anymore. I'm so grateful, I can't thank my stars enough that I got the opportunity

> HE (IRRFAN) WAS SO WARM, SO WELCOMING, HE NEVER MADE ME FEEL LIKE I'M A NEWBIE, HE NEVER MADE ME FEEL THAT HE KNOWS MORE THAN ME, WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY DID. HE JUST RESPECTED MY ART AS A FELLOW ARTISTE

to work with him. I feel privileged to be named his co-star but it breaks my heart to read the word last. It hurts the most when you realise you won't share screen space with him ever again. Working with him was really the opportunity of a lifetime.

When did you first meet Irrfan?

We first met at a script-reading session. We were all waiting for him and I had this notion in my head that 'he's THE Irrfan Khan', he'll definitely have attitude. I was scared as I knew I was playing his daughter in the film and would be interacting with him more than anyone else on the project. Then he stepped in wearing a pink jacket and came to me and I blurted out, "'Hi Papa". He just looked at me, smiled and hugged me, saying, "*Achha aap hain.*" He was so warm, so welcoming, he never made me feel like I'm a newbie. He never made me feel that he knows more than me, which he obviously did. He just respected my art as a fellow artiste. And that meant so much to me, that was so encouraging, I will never forget the moments spent with him.

What was it like spending the first day of the shoot with him?

It was a goosebumps-inducing moment when I first met him on the sets. I was just looking at him and he was looking back. I had to visualise him as my father and had to 'see' him as my father for the camera. We were shooting an important scene. He had already shot for three days and was well steeped into his character by then. But it was my first day and I was feeling apprehensive, though I had come prepared. I needn't have worried as in mere five minutes he got transformed into my father and started seeing me as his daughter. And that feeling got reciprocated and freed me from my own inhibitions. That day would always be special to me. And you know what, I never used to call him 'Sir' on the sets or take his name. It was either Papa or Dad throughout the film. It just seemed natural to call him that. Homi Adajania, our director, told me later that he never worried about the film as he saw a bond develop between us in five seconds. He said he could see him as my father and me as his daughter on camera. That was the most humbling and the sweetest thing.

What was your last memory of Irrfan?

That would be the last day on the set. He wasn't well, I don't know how he performed the scene. It was an important scene. We were shown partying in it. It is really ironic because that was the last day I saw him. After the pack-up, I asked him, "Papa, can I get a picture?" He looked at me and said, "*Humari bahot* pictures hain and pictures *se jyada humari yaadein hain.*" I still remember vividly the look he had on his face when he was saying that. We hugged and then I left the set. That's the last that I saw him.

What's his one quality that you liked?

He always considered himself a student for life. That was his most endearing quality.

Which film of his is your favourite?

Each and every film of his is a masterpiece. My favourite is a little gem called *Qissa*. I just loved him in the film. Everyone should watch it.

Which is your favourite character from Irrfan's enviable repertoire?

Maqbool. That for me remains the best character he essayed. He brought alive the spirit of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through his intense portrayal.

Irrfan's son, Babil Khan, will be making his debut soon. Do you have any message for him?

Babil used to come on the sets of *Angrezi Medium*. I didn't interact with him much then but I met him after the film one time. I think he's a brilliant guy. He's so smart, so passionate about his craft. He's gone to a film school and in that one chat we had, he spoke so passionately about so many things. He suggested a few books to me, which I'm diving into right now. I'm sure he has an amazing spark. I can't wait to watch him in his debut *Qala*. I'm sure he's going to be brilliant. ■

FLIGHT CLUB

TAHIR RAJ BHASIN **CONVINCES** RAGHUVENDRA SINGH **THAT HE WANTS TO FLY HIGHER AND SWIFTER AS AN ACTOR WITH EACH RELEASE**

Delhi boy Tahir Raj Bhasin's father and grandfather were fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force. His younger brother too is a commercial pilot. Tahir wanted to do something different. After completing his Masters degree in Media from Australia, Tahir landed in Mumbai to try his luck in acting. After facing multiple rejections, he did a seven second role in *Kai Po Che* (2013) before bagging the role of the antagonist in *Mardaani* (2014). He held his own against acting powerhouse Rani Mukerji in the film and won plaudits for his chilled-out performance as a ruthless baddie. He locked horns with John Abraham in *Force 2* (2016) as a baddie again before switching lanes towards positive roles and appeared as a yesteryears' star in *Manto* (2018) and the college hero Derek in *Chhichhore* (2019). Two of his films, the sports drama *'83,* where he's playing Sunil Gavaskar, and thriller *Looop Lapeta,* are ready for release. He was stranded in Manali for some months as he was shooting for the web series *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhen* when the second lockdown hit the nation. That led to a certain amount of introspection and he came away more energised than ever. Excerpts from an interview with the self-made actor who remains firmly grounded to his roots…

Looop Lapeta

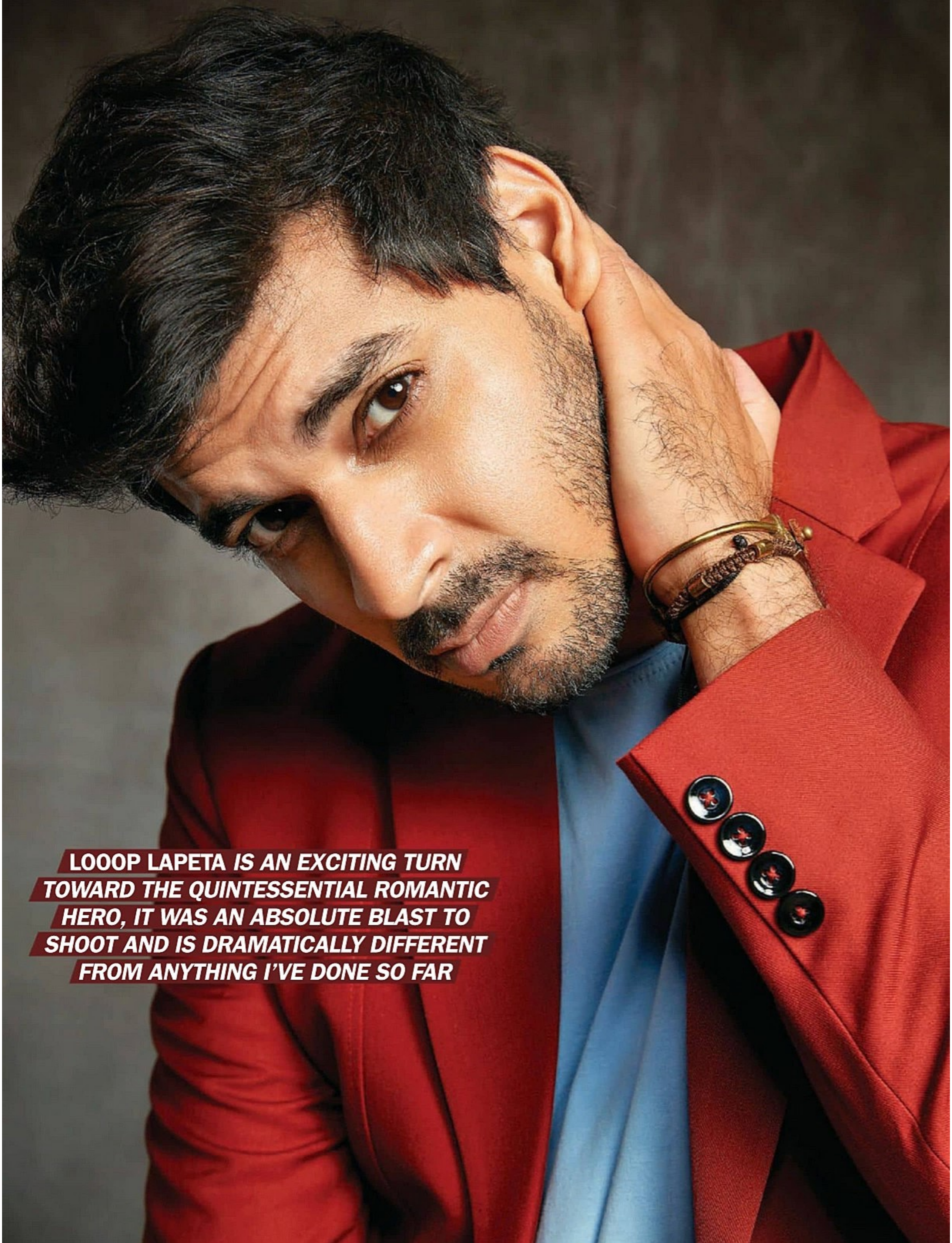
> **TAAPSEE IS SELF-ASSURED AND INCREDIBLY GENUINE. SHE HAS A CHARMING SMILE THAT BREAKS THE ICE INSTANTLY AND HER WORK ETHIC IS VERY INSPIRING. WE GOT ON AMAZINGLY WELL AND IT WAS GREAT TO WORK WITH A CO-STAR WHO WAS IN 5TH GEAR FROM DAY ONE**

WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK BACK AT YOUR JOURNEY FROM *MARDAANI* TO *LOOOP LAPETA*?

It's been an incredible roller-coaster ride. I've played diverse parts in different genres from the anti-hero Walt in *Mardaani* to the college stud Derek in *Chhichhore* while working with some stalwart directors like Pradeep Sarkar, Nitesh Tiwari and Kabir Khan. *Looop Lapeta* is an exciting turn toward the quintessential romantic hero, it was an absolute blast to shoot and is dramatically different from anything I've done so far. I'm excited to see how the audience responds to the film.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT *LOOOP LAPETA*? HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE FILM AMIDST THE LOCKDOWN?

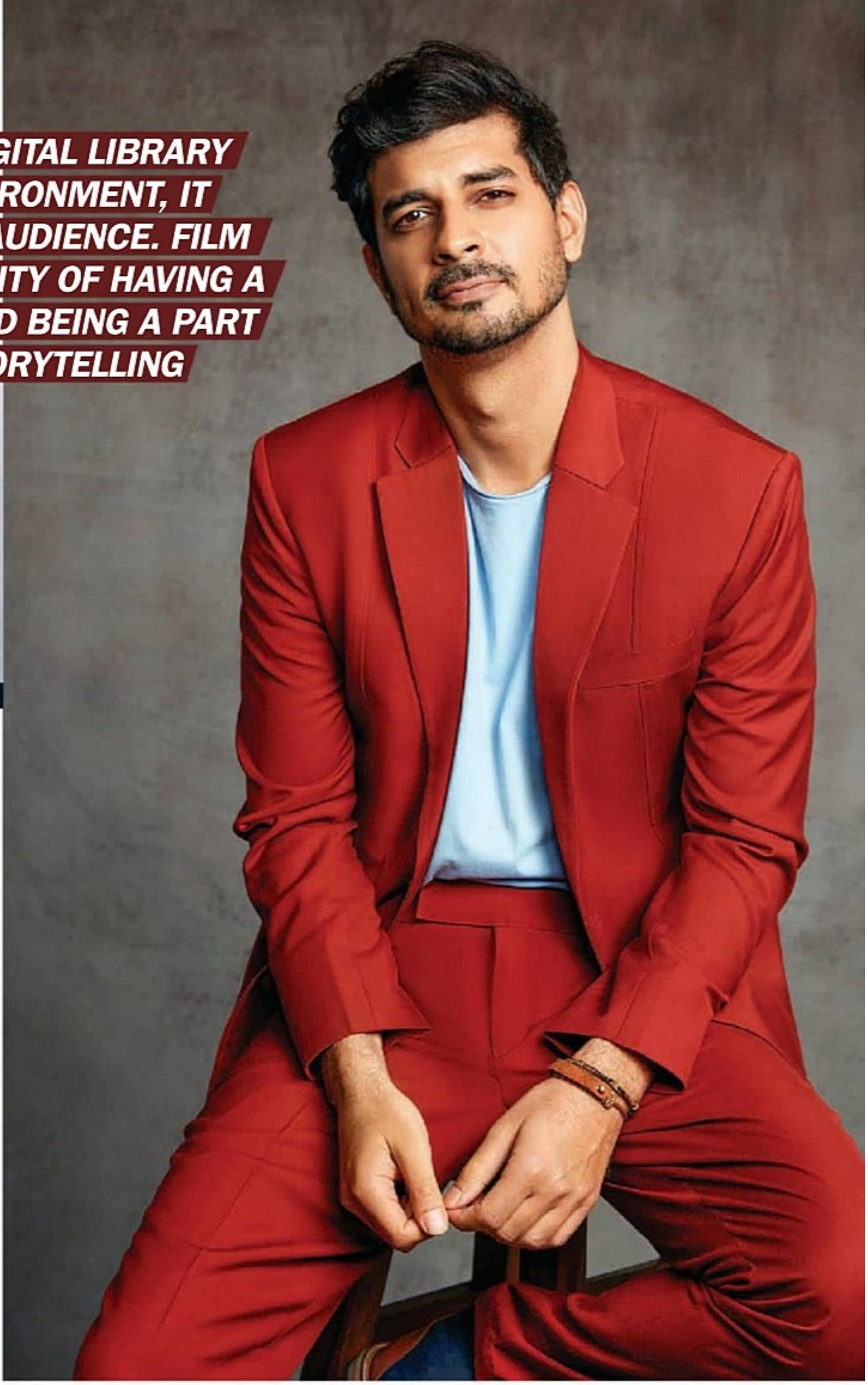
Looop Lapeta is an adrenaline rush. At its core it's a romantic comedy set within a single day's high paced and very stylish chase. It is the Indian adaptation of the German film *Run Lola Run.* The film is about the pandemonium



LOOOP LAPETA *IS AN EXCITING TURN TOWARD THE QUINTESSENTIAL ROMANTIC HERO, IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE BLAST TO SHOOT AND IS DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING I'VE DONE SO FAR*

OTT PLATFORMS ACT AS A DIGITAL LIBRARY FOR FILMS. IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT, IT HELPS ACTORS REACH THEIR AUDIENCE. FILM STARS ALSO HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY OF HAVING A FILM AND A DIGITAL SERIES AND BEING A PART OF DIVERSE FORMS OF STORYTELLING

'83



when the romantic bond between the lead pair, Satya and Savi, is put to the test when one is tasked to rescue the other. Prepping for the film was unique because most of it was done over video calls during the first lockdown. My first meeting with Taapsee happened over zoom when we were interviewed during the lockdown about how we felt about being part of this iconic adaptation.

HOW WAS IT WORKING WITH TAAPSEE PANNU?
Taapsee is self-assured and incredibly genuine. She has a charming smile that breaks the ice instantly and her work ethic is very inspiring. We got on amazingly well and it was great to work with a co-star who was in 5th gear from day one. I found her easily switching between chill and work mode. Satya and Savi are an inseparable yin and yang and all of our scenes needed to ooze that level of comfort. I'm excited to see how this energy translates on screen.

***LOOOP LAPETA* IS SHOT IN GOA, THE LEISURE CAPITAL OF INDIA. DID YOU ALSO DO TOURISTY THINGS IN YOUR FREE TIME OR YOU JUST CONCENTRATED ON WORK?**
Yes. *Looop Lapeta* was shot in Goa and it was a blast to see our weeks of zoom prep materialise in the real world. Coming out of the first lockdown and heading to Goa to shoot was a dream come true. Days off during the schedule were spent in beach shacks and it was a great way for the cast and the crew to unwind and bond. *Looop Lapeta* is all about pace, style and vibe and Goa was the perfect place to bring all those together and add to the *Looop* world.

THE FILM WILL AIR ON AN OTT CHANNEL. ARE YOU OKAY WITH FILMS BEING STREAMED ON OTT?
OTT platforms act as a digital library for films. In today's environment, it helps actors reach their audience. Film stars also have the flexibility of having a film and a digital series and being a part of diverse forms of storytelling. In the near future, both OTT and theatres will co-exist, each having a different role to play.

WILL THE DIGITAL MEDIUM TAKE OVER THEATRE-GOING EXPERIENCE?
Nothing will replace the cinema-going experience. Being in a dark room full of people experiencing a film together with your favourite

popcorn is what the movies are about. I don't think one will over take the other. It's two very different forms of consuming content. One is a social event the other is a private affair that lends itself to chapter wise series. At the moment, safety concerns restrict movements in public places so there's an overlap of content. As we see some semblance of normalcy and the dust settles down, the two medium will co-exist and one will feed into the other giving the audience more choices.

YOU WERE INVOLVED IN A WEB SERIES. COULD YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

I've just finished shooting for a very exciting series titled *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhen* (*YKKA*). It's a show that is a pulp drama, with a mind-bending plot where love must triumph. Shweta Tripathi is playing the female lead and it's a romantic drama; which is a space I'm excited to be delving into with both *Looop Lapeta* and *YKKA* this year.

YOU WERE SHOOTING FOR *YKKA* WHEN THE SECOND LOCKDOWN HAPPENED AND YOU GOT STRANDED IN MANALI.

Yes. I was shooting for *YKKA* in Ladakh in March when the second wave hit and as a result I spent the second wave lockdown in Ladakh and Manali. The down time amidst nature allowed me to grasp the journey I've had so far, appreciate it and figure out where I need to grow and also weed out the things I need to let go of.

WHAT HAS THIS PANDEMIC TAUGHT YOU AS A PERSON?

The pandemic has taught me to be be appreciative of the moment and grateful for all that we have. Too much time in the pre-pandemic world was spent worrying and strategising for the future. Planning and preparation are still important but with a new-found humility and appreciation for the present.

WHAT AFFECTED YOU THE MOST DURING THE LOCKDOWN?

When I read about the loss of life during this pandemic, it made me ponder the temporality of things and also about the short time we have here. It made us value the passage of time and the preciousness of it.

DID YOU LEARN ANY HOUSEHOLD CHORE IN THE LOCKDOWN?

I've realised folding clean laundry can be therapeutic and I've become pretty efficient at it.

YOU HAD REVEALED IN AN INTERVIEW THAT YOU WERE REJECTED 250-300 TIMES...

The improvements that came as a result of obstacles, prepared me to be propelled when the time was right. Strength lay in getting hit and in the will to keep moving forward. To be honest, I never saw my initial time in Mumbai as a struggling phase, it was an aspiring phase. I was visualising a dream and aspiring to make it real, and it's the hardship and the journey that make the successes worth celebrating.

WHAT ARE THE PLUS POINTS OF BEING AN OUTSIDER IN SHOWBIZ?

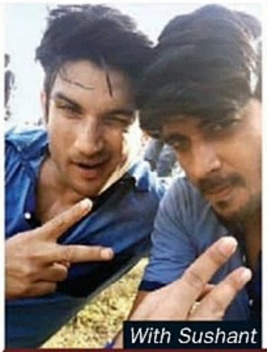
The positive is that there is no comparison and your only competition is you. It allows you the creative freedom to carve out your own path, set your own acting style and the thrill of being self-made.

YOU WORKED WITH ANOTHER 'OUTSIDER' SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT IN *CHHICHHORE*...

Sushant was the most intelligent co-star I've worked with. He was self-made and his hunger to learn more was unparalleled. His conversations ranged from music to astronomy and education. His choices in films and the constant focus of self-growth set him apart. I was very lucky to have crossed paths with him. He was an absolute gem.

A FILM YOU WISH YOU WERE A PART OF?

Wish to be in won't be the most apt phrase but there are definitely films that I'm so glad were made. These are films that leave me feeling exhilarated as an actor. *Udta Punjab, Gully Boy, Andhadhun* are some names that come to mind. I do hope I get to work with the directors of these films in the future. ■


With Sushant

'83

Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhen

> SUSHANT WAS THE MOST INTELLIGENT CO-STAR I'VE WORKED WITH. HE WAS SELF-MADE AND HIS HUNGER TO LEARN MORE WAS UNPARALLELED... HIS CHOICES IN FILMS AND THE CONSTANT FOCUS OF SELF-GROWTH SET HIM APART

Where the wild things are

SAIYAMI KHER brings out her wild beauty to work in this stark photoplay that hints at hidden storms

PHOTOGRAPHS: MEETESH TANEJA
MAKEUP AND HAIR: VENUS FERREIRA
STYLIST: VARUNESH PAL

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive

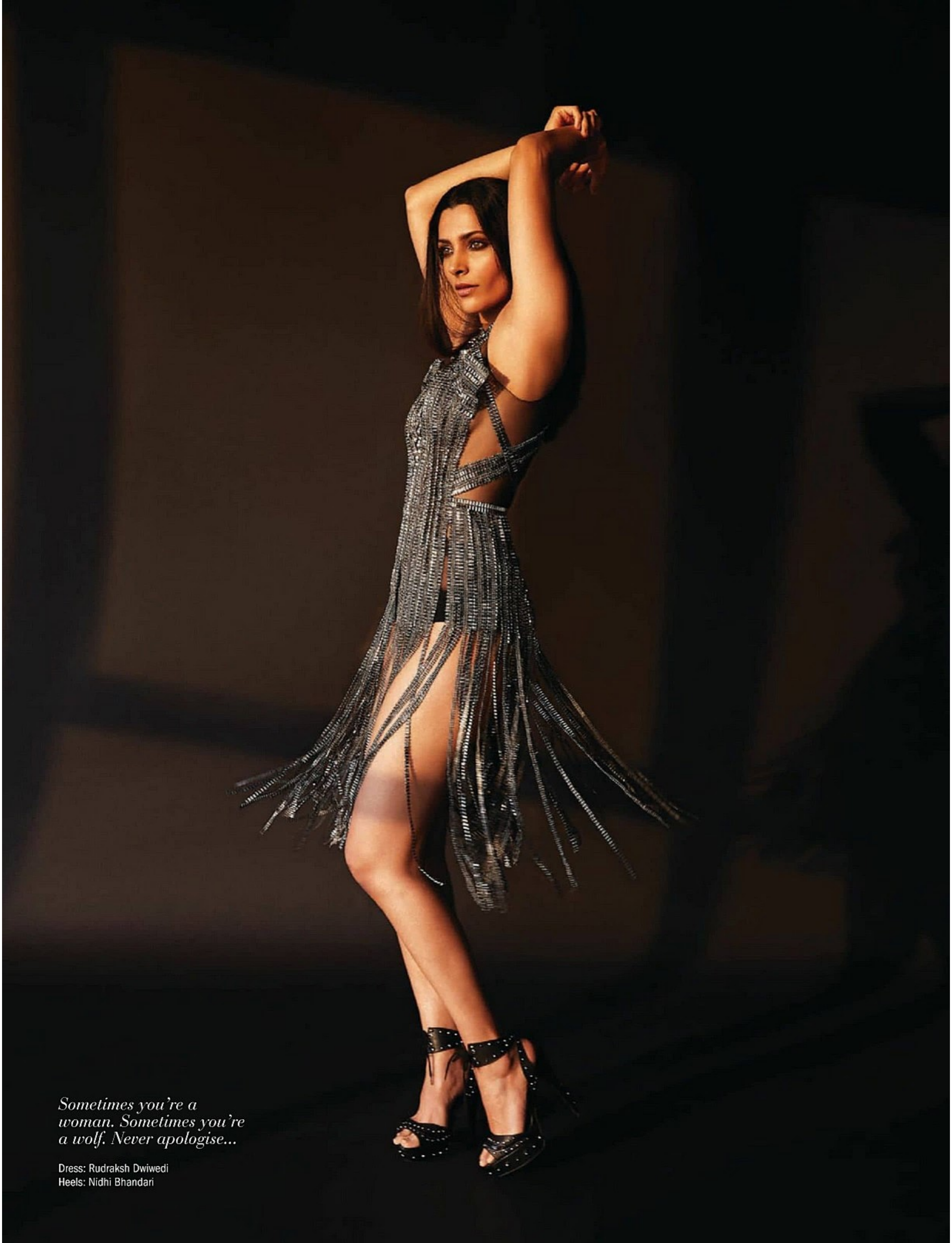
Jacket: RS by Rocky Star
Bustier: Rudraksh Dwiwedi

If you feel the rhythm, you can be standing still and still be dancing

Trench Coat: RS by Rocky Star

Some women aren't
meant to be tamed.
Untame yourself if you
want to run with them

Trench Coat: RS by Rocky Star



Sometimes you're a woman. Sometimes you're a wolf. Never apologise...

Dress: Rudraksh Dwiwedi
Heels: Nidhi Bhandari

You have to be in love
with your every breath
to be truly alive. Feel
the wind, be one with
the wind...

Bodysuit : Rudraksh Dwivedi

WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OFF?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns have taken the light out of everyone's life and film folks are no exception, finds *Mayukh Majumdar*

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has brought regular life to a standstill and while its physical effects are quite well known, not much is spoken about the adverse emotional and mental issues it has caused so far. With movie theatres shutting down due to the lockdowns, the film industry has taken a massive blow and so have the members of the film fraternity. Many have tested positive for the novel coronavirus during the second wave and others have lost projects and money. They say you don't understand the value of something till you've lost it and our stars agree. We reached out to a few about the changes that COVID-19 has brought in their life and how it has affected them. Excerpts...

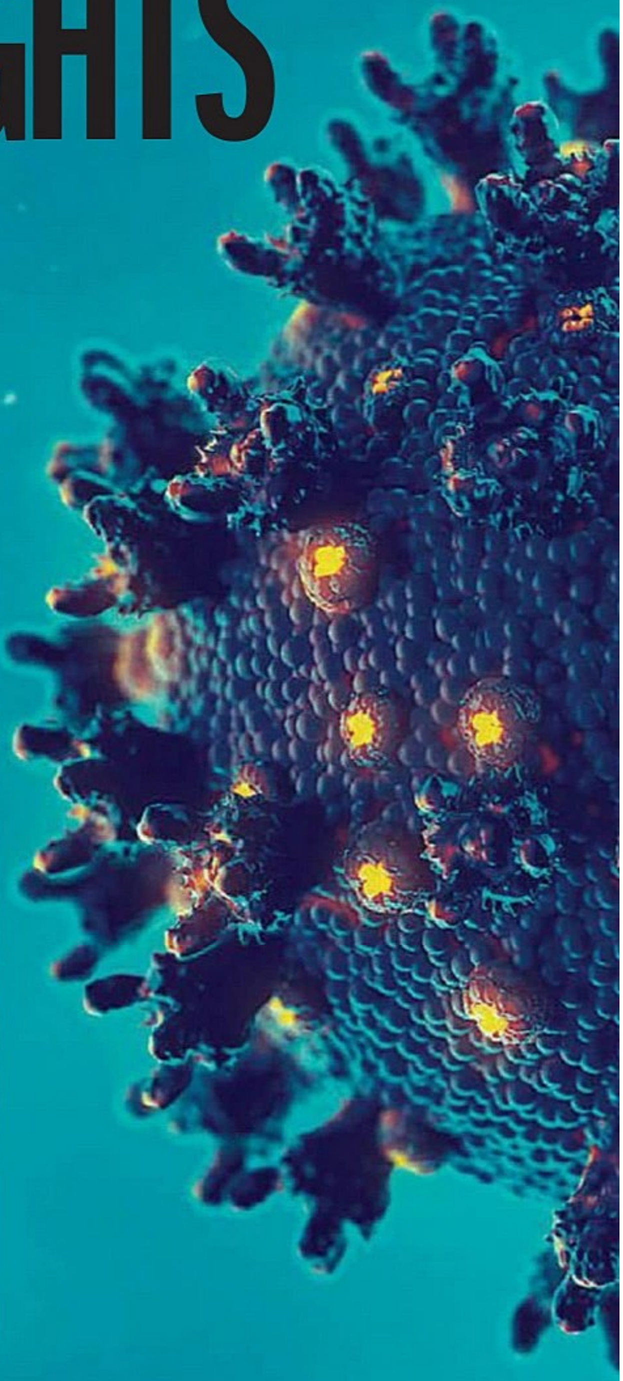


IMAGE :123RF

PARINEETI CHOPRA

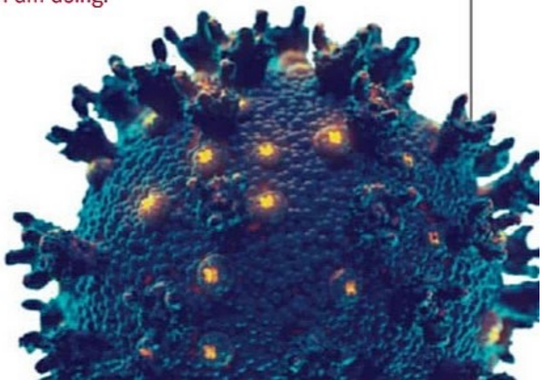
The lockdown helped Parineeti Chopra introspect about her life and career and the roles she wants to take up in the future. While she states that she has been "very bad" at keeping up with her fitness regime, she has learnt to cook. "I genuinely didn't even know how to boil water and I had to learn from the basics. I surprise myself now when after a hectic day I call over a friend for dinner even if I'm not having it myself. I like to spend that half an hour in the kitchen preparing something silly for my friends. I never imagined that cooking would be de-stressing for me," she says.

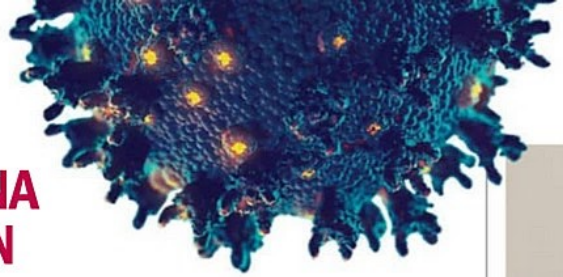
SWARA BHASKER

Swara Bhasker was working on her project, *Jahaan Chaar Yaar* in Goa when her co-star, Meher Vij, tested positive for COVID-19. A day before the news broke, Swara told us that it was a crazy time to be working because of the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases. "Everyone's masked up except the actors. You're so cautious and sanitising constantly. On the sets, we have temperature regulators and people keep sanitising everyone's hands. We're hearing about so many cases so everyone on the sets is on edge and on high alert. That carefree and fun nature of shoots is gone," she enumerated. She also spoke about simple things that COVID-19 has taken away like the hug you give someone after meeting them after a year or so. She said that during her conversations with members of the film fraternity, COVID-19 is a recurring topic and everyone is trying to figure things out. Said she, "My earnings for the last financial year were less than the previous years but I've been fortunate because I've been working."

JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ

Jacqueline Fernandes's *Ram Setu* co-star, Akshay Kumar tested positive as did a few other cast members. In an interview with ETimes, the actress says that her parents constantly worry for her. "I think in 2020, the outbreak of the virus shocked everyone. This time around, while we were under-prepared for the second wave, people came out in large numbers to actively help those in distress," she points out adding, "My friends from Sri Lanka and my parents, who live in Bahrain, watch the news and panic when they see the situation in India. My parents desperately want me to live with them in Bahrain... even my uncles and cousins in Sri Lanka are asking me to come and stay with them. However, I am pretty intent on staying put here and continuing the work I am doing."





RAVEENA TANDON

Raveena Tandon is concerned about her kids, Ranbir and Rasha. She feels they're losing out on traditional schooling and a normal childhood. The actress is also not happy with the way the online classes are being conducted. "Unfortunately, they are spending a lot of time online which I really don't like. School gets over at 4 PM but they're making them do extracurricular activities online which, I think, is such a waste because children should take a break and do something in their own home. They're making them do stuff like cooking classes online, no practical stuff. They're sitting in front of a laptop and watching everything. Instead, they should tell them that this is an extracurricular activity. Take a break and shut your computer, read a book and tell us what you read in that book or play a game and describe the game or go and plant a tree. I would have done that," she says. Because of this, Raveena has initiated some lifestyle changes to ensure that her children are happy and occupied. "For example, once their schooling and tuition are over, we play pictionary. This past one year has been a complete pleasure where we've been at home with each other and it's brought so many families closer. I'm getting them to do things around the house like gardening and getting them to be with our pets. Everyone is pitching in, washing and cleaning. I'm also teaching them to cook."

ARJUN MATHUR

The actor has taken this time off to work on his physique. "Last year, I really reached rock bottom with my fitness. Once *Made In Heaven Season 2* was starting, I put in work because my character, Karan Mehra, is fit. Now, I think I'm using the excuse of *Made In Heaven* to reach my personal fitness peak. You feel good and you feel confident and it plays into your general psychology. It's important for my mental health to stay fit. With the lockdown now, one of the ways for me to not spiral mentally is to keep myself physically fit," he says. The actor had bought a new home last year and all his savings have been spent on it. "Just before lockdown, I'd just finished breaking down the walls of the home. It was under renovation when the lockdown happened and then, I was broke. I do not know how but through small projects during the lockdown, as of today, I'm in a comfortable space again."

SANJANA SANGHI

Sanjana Sanghi says that it was definitely difficult to re-orient herself with the current scenario. "As actors, our schedules are super hectic, thrown in with tons of travel and no set routine. The biggest change that COVID's brought with both the lockdowns is the ability to experience the stillness, to be in one place. No one saw the ferocity of the second wave. I'm sure it's challenging to re-orient all of us. But as artistes, the importance of spending time recuperating creatively needs to be emphasised more. The chance to revisit all of one's learnings, reading (both scripts and books), engaging with content from all over the world is important to our process and now we're getting ample time to do that," she reflects.

SHWETA TRIPATHI SHARMA

Shweta Tripathi Sharma tested positive for COVID-19 during the second wave. "I love being on set and my Madhya Pradesh schedule for *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein* was just about to begin and my team and I were excited. When I tested positive, I was supposed to be in MP and I felt really bad. My first call was to my director. I told him that I was so sorry because what happens is that there is so much money at stake and there are dates that need to be reshuffled and all the plans go for a toss. Thankfully, we managed the shoot later. During my quarantine period, I thought I'll watch a lot of shows and read a lot of books but when you're doing it out of choice, it's different and when you're doing it because all you have on your hands is time, it's not fun anymore. The isolation period was tough. My husband also tested positive and we were together so that was special. However, I lost my sense of taste and smell and I had fever. My appetite had also increased so I was eating a lot," she reveals.

RASIKA DUGAL

Rasika Dugal is still holding onto the hope that the "old normal" is not a thing of the past yet. "Life has changed completely in the last year and a half. There is a new normal which we are all trying to come to terms with. One that is defined by uncertainty and fear. And one in which real life is lived virtually. After all, who would have thought that one could shoot a short film on a Google Meet call, perform a play on Zoom, promote shows and films online. I have done all that in the last year. While I am amazed by how quickly people can adapt and pivot to accommodate a new way of being, I do hope the ' old normal' is not a thing of nostalgia yet," she muses. The pandemic has caused Rasika severe mental stress, especially because of all the pain and suffering around. "The pain of witnessing helplessness, suffering and loss is not easy for anyone. With the collapse of most systems, I constantly worry about whether I will be able to take care of myself and of people around me. The nagging questions never end: Am I being responsible? How responsible is responsible enough? How can I help in a meaningful way? Am I doing enough? Life around us has changed pretty quickly and the mind may or may not always be upto that speed. I am being patient with mine and taking a day at a time," she points out.

GURMEET CHOUDHARY

In October last year, Gurmeet Choudhary and his wife, Debina Bonnerjee tested positive for COVID-19. Says the actor, "The quarantine phase was quite a life-changing experience for me. I discovered a lot about myself and started valuing my surroundings, my family, all those around me, pretty much my life in general. There are so many things that we humans take for granted, for example something as simple as the sensation of taste or smell. It was a very tough phase that we all went through, and I tried to divert my mind by reading books and watching varied types of movies and web shows. I started practising meditation which was so refreshing mentally and physically. Due to our busy schedules, I never got enough time to spend with my wife Debina and given the lockdown I finally could undo that. I had ample time to discover my partner and spend quality time with her.
We started doing activities together like reading books, watching movies, working out and motivating others on our social media platforms towards positivity and awareness to combat the tough times." He also has been actively helping people with resources and information. "It's my duty, we have to help each other. Sonu Sood has really inspired me. Whenever I help someone, they ask me what they can do for me in return. I just tell them that they should go ahead and help five other people," he adds.

ANUPRIA GOENKA

"That time seems a thing of the past when you could meet everyone freely and work in a free atmosphere. It seems like another time and another place. Now, there is uncertainty in the air. There's a lot of anxiety knowing how the migrant population was suffering last time and how people were suffering for oxygen cylinders, beds and health issues this time. Most of my friends and family have gone through it and it's been a traumatic time. The sense of planning has completely gone. We've started adjusting everything according to COVID-19," says the *Criminal Justice* actress.

DAISY SHAH

Instead of stressing about work, Daisy Shah has taken to other media formats to keep herself occupied like her YouTube channel and her social media accounts. "When it comes to affecting my lifestyle, it has impacted me in a way I never imagined. It has made me realise that it's okay to slow down in life and take it easy. It's okay to take some time out for yourself and your family. You don't have to be on the run always. Slowing down is something I have learnt during this lockdown and it was a valuable lesson."

AMYRA DASTUR

When Amyra Dastur tested positive for COVID-19 last year, she was extremely frightened. "It was really hard initially, especially when the period of lockdown kept getting extended. It felt like normal was going further and further away. I'm not the most tech-savvy person so this shooting from home and auditioning on zoom calls was very hard for me mentally. I just felt grateful that these silly things were my problems. I saw how the lockdown affected so many people devastatingly because of the charities I worked with through this time. I made a promise to always give back something whenever I get a pay cheque." She was most worried about her father who is the medical director at Mumbai's Bhatia Hospital. "He was going to work everyday from the beginning of the pandemic. I moved back to my parents house in April 2020 to just be there for him and for my mom who was also getting stressed because Dad is 67 years old. I'm really proud of my dad for sticking it through and really managing things in such scary times," she adds.

STARS WHO TESTED POSITIVE

SHILPA SHETTY'S FAMILY

On May 7, Shipa Shetty revealed that her parents-in-law, her children, her mother and her husband, Raj Kundra had tested positive for COVID-19, while she tested negative.

SONU SOOD

On April 17, Sood shared he had tested positive for the virus. "This is to inform you that I have tested positive this morning for Covid-19. As a precaution, I've already quarantined myself and taken utmost care. But don't worry, this gives me ample time to solve your problems, remember that I'm always there for you."

ASHUTOSH RANA

On April 13, the actor said that he felt fortunate to know about the illness on the auspicious occasion of Navratri. "It is a special blessing of Goddess Durga that I came to know today on a sitting day (*beithaki*) that I am suffering from corona. I have unwavering faith in the grace of his Holiness Gurudev Dadda*ji* that I will soon be healthy."

VICKY KAUSHAL

On April 5, Vicky Kaushal shared that he had tested positive for COVID-19. "In spite of all care and precautions, unfortunately, I have tested positive for COVID-19. Following all essential protocols, I am under home quarantine, taking medication as prescribed by my doctor."

KATRINA KAIF

A day after Vicky Kaushal tested positive for the virus, Katrina Kaif revealed that she too had contracted COVID-19. "I Have immediately isolated myself and will be under home quarantine. I'm following all safety protocols under the advice of my doctors. Requesting everyone who came in contact with me to get tested immediately too."

AKSHAY KUMAR

Akshay Kumar shared on April 4 that he had contracted COVID-19. A day later, he shared on social media that he had been admitted to a hospital in Mumbai.

BHUMI PEDNEKAR

On April 5, Bhumi Pednekar shared she had tested positive for COVID-19. "I am feeling okay and have isolated myself. I am following the protocol given by my doctor and health professionals."

FOR COVID-19 IN 2021

GOVINDA
On April 4, a spokesperson for Govinda said that he had tested positive for COVID-19. "Despite utmost precautions, unfortunately Mr Govinda Ahuja has tested positive for Covid-19. He has mild symptoms and is under home quarantine."

ALIA BHATT
On April 2, Bhatt announced she had tested positive for COVID-19. "Hello all, I have tested positive for Covid-19. I have immediately isolated myself and will be under home quarantine. I am following all safety protocols under the advice of my doctors."

RANBIR KAPOOR
On March 10, Neetu Kapoor confirmed that her son, Ranbir Kapoor had tested positive for COVID-19. "Thank you for your concern and your good wishes. Ranbir has tested positive for Covid-19. He is on medication and recovering well."

KARTIK AARYAN
On March 22, Kartik Aaryan revealed he had tested positive for COVID-19. "Positive *ho gaya. Dua karo*," he wrote on social media.

AAMIR KHAN
On March 24, Aamir Khan's team informed the press that the actor had tested positive for COVID-19 and was under home isolation.

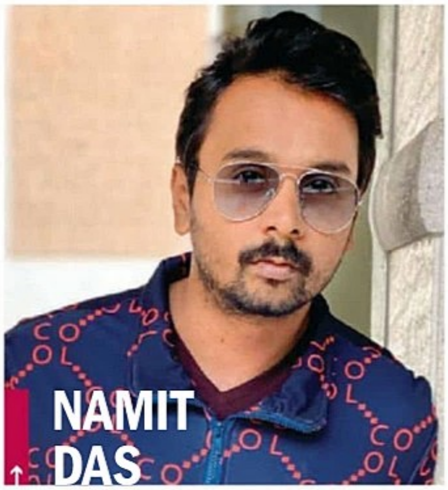
R MADHAVAN
A day after his *3 Idiots* co-star, Aamir Khan tested positive for COVID-19, Madhavan shared that he had contracted the virus as well. Sharing a picture of Khan from the hit movie, he wrote: "Farhan HAS to follow Rancho and Virus has always been after us BUT this time he bloody caught up."

FATIMA SANA SHAIKH
On March 29, Fatima wrote on her social media. "I have tested positive for COVID-19 and am currently following all the precautions and protocols and have been home quarantining myself."

SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI
On March 16, the actor revealed that he had tested positive for the virus and shared a post with the caption: "*Abhi* Vaccine *aane ki khushi hui hi thi ki*...Corona bola *Thappa!*"

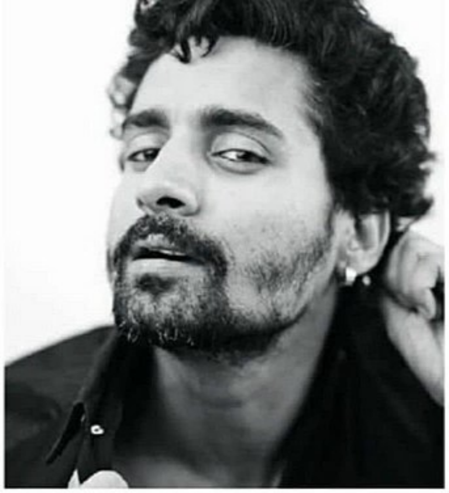
GAUTAM GULATI

When asked how he has coped with the pandemic financially, the actor says that it is indeed been difficult to adjust to this situation. "We're all in this boat together and we will overcome such situations united, that's what was going through my mind. The main priority during this time is everyone's health and how people are coping with it. The suffering that people endured, the health issues, the situation that daily wage workers and frontline workers are in... I really couldn't think of anything else at that moment. The times are tough given that it's risky to even step out of the house right now."



NAMIT DAS

"COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our lifestyle and it's a 180-degree turnaround in that sense. It's really changed the way we look at life right now. It's scary because the scare is not just about yourself but also about giving it to the ones you love. That, I think, is the main mental stress that one faces at the moment," he says. The actor also feels grateful that he has a big enough space wherein he can separate his office and his home. So that he can work from home and also spend time with his wife without both of them feeling claustrophobic.



CHANDAN ROY SANYAL

Chandan faced considerable financial stress last year. "Just before the lockdown, I spent a lot of money renovating my house. I almost spent everything considering there is work and I thought that money would come, but my cash dried up in a week. I got into a little bit of a mess, financially. If I had known, I wouldn't have spent so much money on my house. I'm somehow surviving on my savings that I had forgotten about. The Rs 2000 or 3000 that I 'd saved every month came handy."

AKSHAY OBEROI

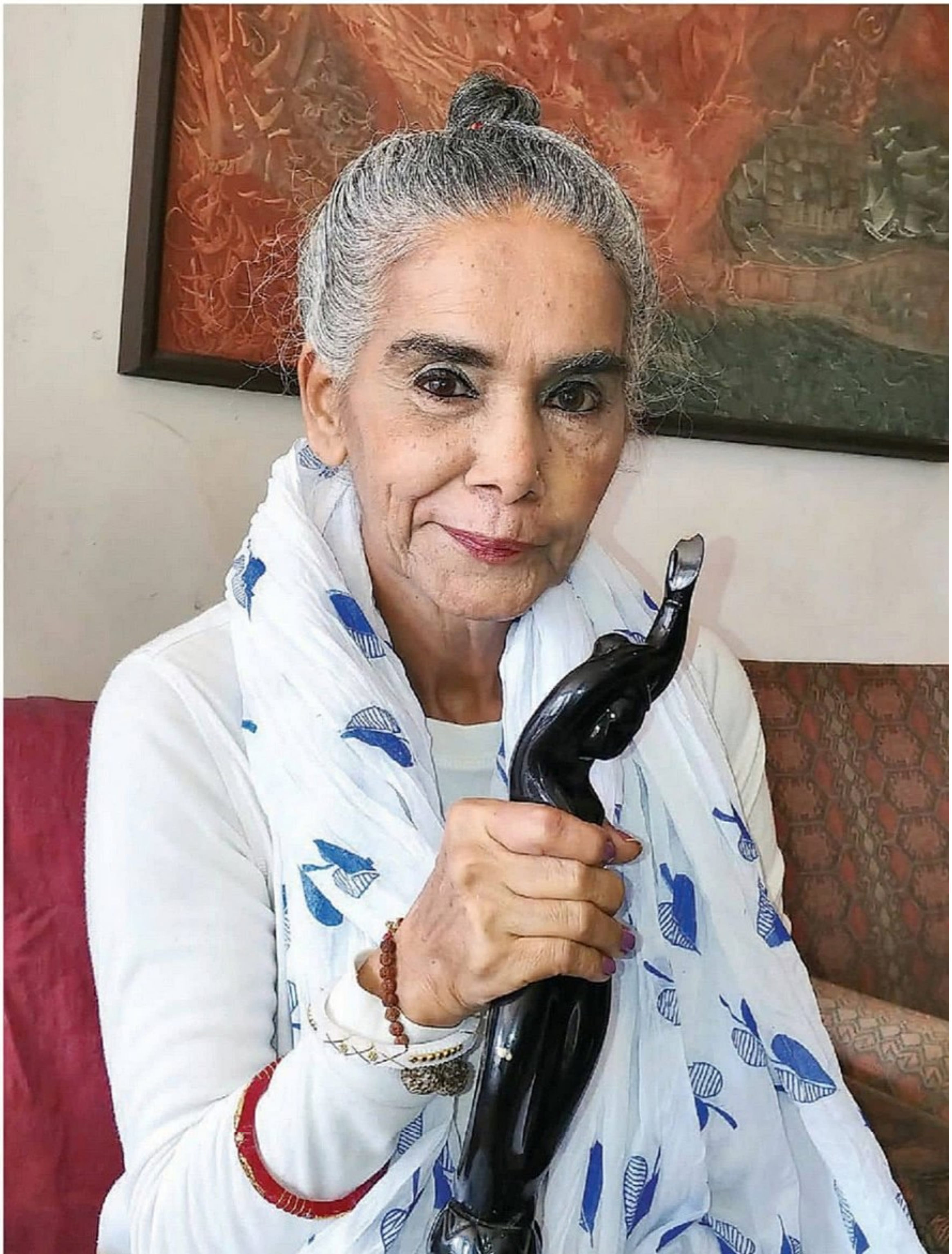
Akshay Oberoi says that COVID-19 has affected his lifestyle the same way it has affected pretty much everyone else which is the social aspect of it - being unable to meet people and having to wear masks. He's currently not working due to the lockdown and hence, he's gone to the US to spend some time with his in-laws in New Jersey. "I love acting and here I am, months on end, not being able to act. It's starting to feel like I've lost an arm or a piece of myself. It's definitely not easy to cope with that. Just the fact that I'm not able to act is frustrating," he says, adding, "Luckily, I've been working long enough and I had some savings and my wife works so we were all good. I can't sit here and complain because we are able to ride the wave just fine. So far we're okay and my heart really goes out to people who aren't able to do so."

FAREWELL...

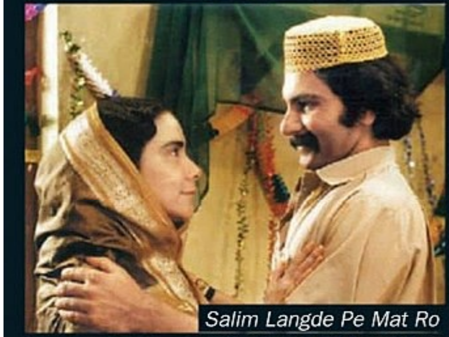
APRIL 19, 1945 – JULY 16, 2021

Everyone's favourite screen grandmother, ***Surekha Sikri****, passed away recently:* ***Devesh Sharma*** *offers a brief profile of her life and times*

Everytime you looked at her on screen, she'd remind you of your own grandmother. The supremely talented Surekha Sikri did a multitude of roles from the '70s till now but Indian audiences will forever remember her as the grumpy *Dadisa* from her hit serial *Balika Vadhu* (2008-2016). She also played the grandmother in *Pardes Mein Hai Mera Dil* (2016-2017). And in the bumper hit comedy, *Badhaai Ho* (2018) as well. She was bedridden in most of the film and yet made her presence felt. Her staunch support for her pregnant middle-aged daughter-in-law (played by Neena Gupta) in the latter half of the film was its turning point. She won the Filmfare Best Actor In A Supporting Role trophy for her crackling performance and also won her third National Award in the Best Supporting Actress category for the same. Her first National honour came to her for her rock-solid performance as Rajjo, a middle-aged Muslim woman who gives shelter to a Sikh couple in *Tamas* (1988), which was a searing portrayal of the Paritition riots. Her next National



Badhaai Ho


Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro

Mammo

Receiving the National Award for *Badhaai Ho*

Balika Vadhu

> **SHE STARTED LIFE IN FILMS WITH THE POLITICAL SATIRE *KISSA KURSI KA* WHICH WAS BANNED BY INDIRA GANDHI DURING THE EMERGENCY**

Award came for Shyam Benegal's *Mammo* (1995), where she played the elder sister to Farida Jalal's titular character. Her anguish at the deportation of her sister is palpable. She became part of Benegal's so-called Muslim trilogy, appearing as courtesan Ittan Bai in *Sardari Begum* (1996) and as Fayyazi in *Zubeidaa* (2001).

Surekha was the darling of arthouse and middle-of-the road filmmakers and somehow couldn't cement an equation with commercial directors, despite her impeccable pedigree. She started life in films with the political satire *Kissa Kursi Ka* (1977). Though her role didn't go unnoticed, sadly the film was banned by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency. Her other memorable films include *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989), Nazar (1991), *Little Buddha* (1993), *Naseem* (1995), *Sarfarosh* (1999), *Cotton Mary* (1999) and *Mr And Mrs Iyer* (2003). Her last on-screen appearance was in a segment of Netflix original *Ghost Stories* (2020), along with Jahnvi Kapoor and Vijay Varma, where again she was bedridden but still left a mark on the audience.

Besides films she made a name for herself in television initially in serials like *Banegi Apni Baat* (1994) and *Just Mohabbat* (1996). Both ran for four years. She also had an important role in Gulzar's *Kirdaar* (1993-1994). In 2004, she reunited with Gulzar on the serial *Tehreer… Munshi Premchand Ki,* which was an adaptation of the writings of celebrated Hindi writer Munshi Premchand. Her second innings in TV started with *Balika Vadhu,* which remained her most popular serial and turned her into a national grandmother.

Surekha Sikri, nee Verma, was born in Uttar Pradesh on April 19, 1945. Her father, Wing Commander LC Verma, served in the Indian Air Force and her mother, Zohra Verma, taught at the Aligarh Muslim University. Her childhood was spent in Almora and Nainital. She attended Aligarh Muslim University and after college joined the National School of Drama in 1965, graduating three years later in 1968. She worked with the NSD Repertory Company for over a decade before shifting base to Mumbai. Surekha Sikri was the recipient of 1989 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. Her first play was the Greek tragedy, *The Trojan Women* in which she played Helen of Troy. She reportedly excelled in the plays directed by Ebrahim Alkazi and B.M. Shah. She set a benchmark for theatre artistes in plays like *Devyani Ka Kehna Hai* (1972), *Look Back In Anger* (1974), *Aadhe Adhure* (1976), *Sandhya Chhaya* (1978), *Mahabhoj* (1982), *Tughlaq* (1982) and *Cherry Ka Bagicha* (1983).

Her first marriage ended in a divorce. She has a son, Rahul Sikri, who is an artist, from her first marriage. Surekha met her second husband Hemant Rege, an ad filmmaker, in 1985 during the making of *Tamas.* After a long courtship, they married in 1994. She lost her husband in 2009 to cardiac arrest. The actress is distantly related to Naseeruddin Shah. Her sister Manara, also known as Parveen Murad, was married to Naseer at one point. The duo have a daughter named Heeba Shah, who is also an actress. In fact, it was Heeba who played the younger version of her maternal aunt in *Balika Vadhu.* Besides acting, she was interested in literature and Urdu poetry and her renditions of popular Urdu poets, especially Faiz, which can be found on YouTube, are a treat to watch.

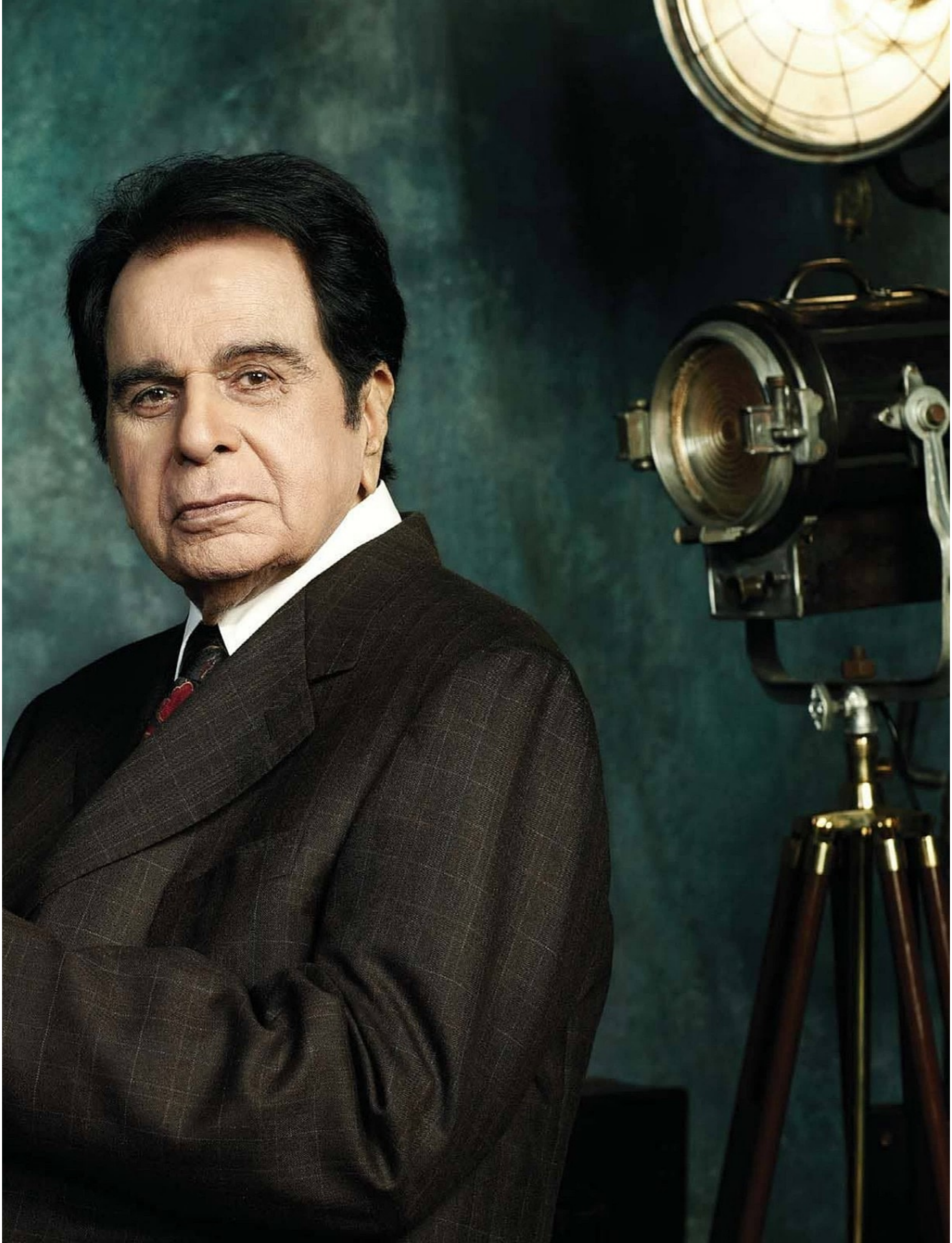
In 2018, after slipping and hitting her head on the bathroom floor, the actress suffered a brain stroke. She had another brain stroke in 2020. Surekha was bedridden after that. She had not been keeping well for quite some time and died of cardiac arrest on July 16. She's no longer with us in flesh but will forever remain with us in spirit through her work in TV and films. ■

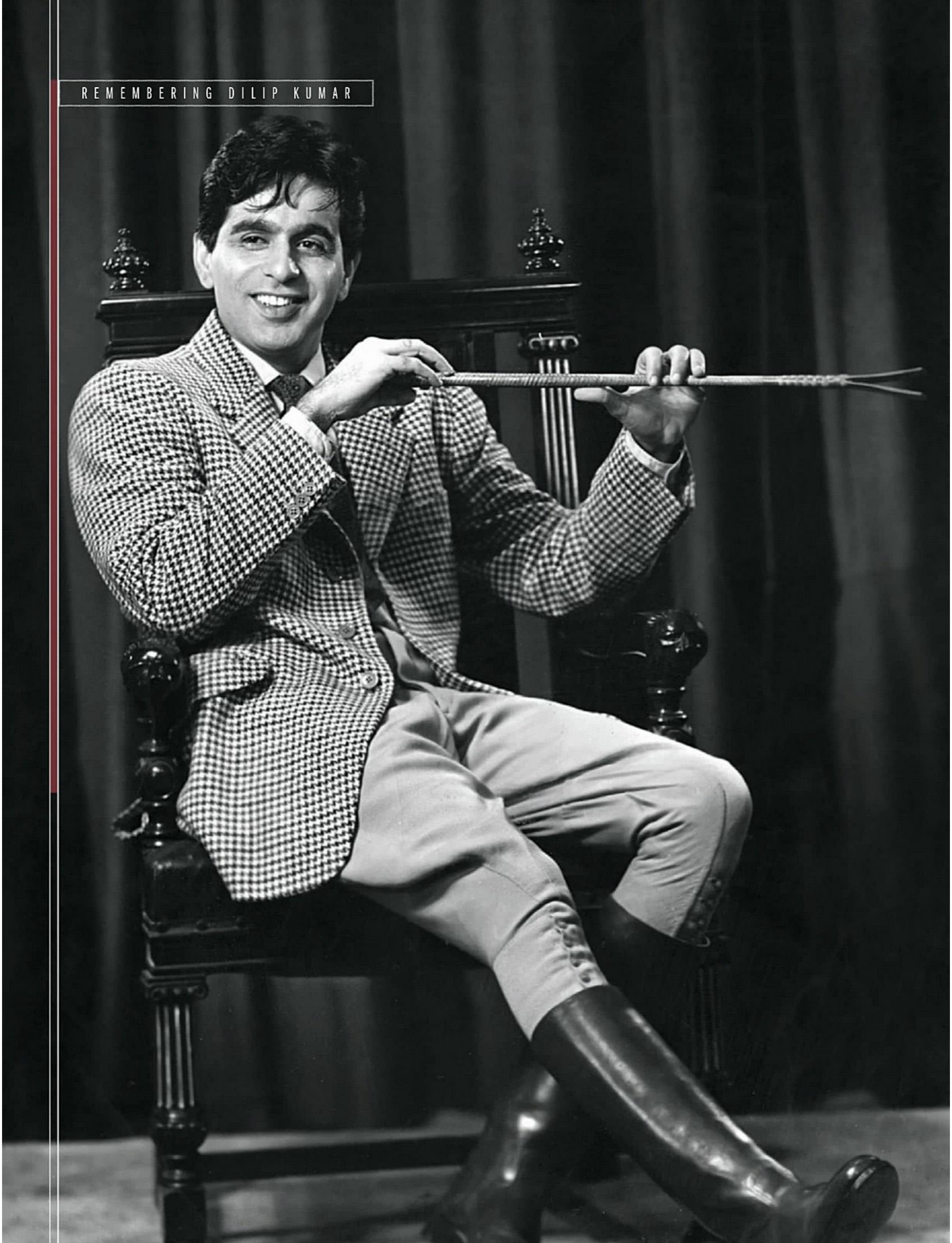
REQUIEM FOR A KING

DILIP KUMAR, OUR GREATEST LIVING ACTOR, PASSED AWAY RECENTLY. PRESENTING A SERIES OF ARTICLES AS A TRIBUTE TO HIS MEMORY

How do you remember Dilip Kumar? His achievements are too innumerable to encapsulate. He always had a special bond with *Filmfare* in the sense that he was the winner of the inaugural Filmfare Award. He won the Filmfare Best Actor Award for *Daag* (1952), *Azaad* (1955), *Devdas* (1955), *Naya Daur* (1957), *Kohinoor* (1960), *Leader* (1964), *Ram Aur Shyam* (1967), *Shakti* (1982). He was also the recipient of Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1994), Padma Bhushan (1991) and Padma Vibhushan (2015). The Government of Pakistan conferred on him their highest civilian honour, Nishan-e-Imtiaz (1998). But is a man the sum of his achievements? He was said to be the uncrowned king of tragedy and ruled the marquee along with fellow superstars Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand. They kind of completed each other, were fiercely competitive but remained loyal friends throughout. He lived a life less ordinary outside the arclights as well. Perhaps the camera wasn't off ever for him. How else can you explain him publicly declaring in court that he loved Madhubala, his sudden wedding to Saira Banu or his equally spontaneous second wedding which brought him infamy. It was said that his silences were more impactful than reams of dialogue mouthed by others and he could get his expressions across even with his back to the camera. When a giant tree falls, it doesn't really die. The forest keeps its memory alive. And that's what we've tried here, gathering the kernels of Dilip Kumar's extraordinary life and sowing them in our pages for posterity...

PHOTOGRAPH: JATIN KAMPANI





IN MEMORIAM

DILIP KUMAR PASSED AWAY ON JULY 7. **DEVESH SHARMA** PROVIDES A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS LIFE

Yusuf Khan a.k.a. Dilip Kumar was born on December 11, 1922 at his family home in the Qissa Khawani Bazaar area of Peshawar. He was one of the twelve children born to Lala Ghulam Sarwar Khan, a fruit merchant, and his wife Ayesha Begum. Raj Kapoor's ancestral home was in the same locality. They were said to be childhood friends. The family had property at Deolali, near Nashik. In the mid-'30s they left Peshawar and settled there. He studied at the prestigious Barnes School at Deolali. He later joined the Khalsa College in Mumbai where he was reunited with Raj Kapoor, who was also a student there.

Believe it or not, Dilip Kumar never wanted to be an actor. His first love was sports and he was a consummate footballer and cricketer. He also wanted to open a chain of high tea outlets. Then, this Peshawari lad was also overseeing his father's fruit business. Chance led him to be spotted by actor and producer Devika Rani, who, impressed by his good looks, offered him the lead role in *Jwar Bhata* (1944). The rest, as they say, is history. The shy actor who in his first film fumbled his lines and had trouble doing romantic scenes with his heroine went on to become a legend in his own lifetime -- crowned with sobriquets such as 'the tragedy king,' or 'the complete actor'. Some call him an institution and actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Anil Kapoor and even Shah Rukh Khan claim to be the pupils of this guru.

He won the inaugural Filmfare Best Actor Award for *Daag* (1952) and later won it for *Azaad* (1955), *Devdas* (1955), *Naya Daur* (1957), *Kohinoor* (1960), *Leader* (1964), *Ram Aur Shyam* (1967), *Shakti* (1982). He was also the recipient of Dadasaheb Phalke Award

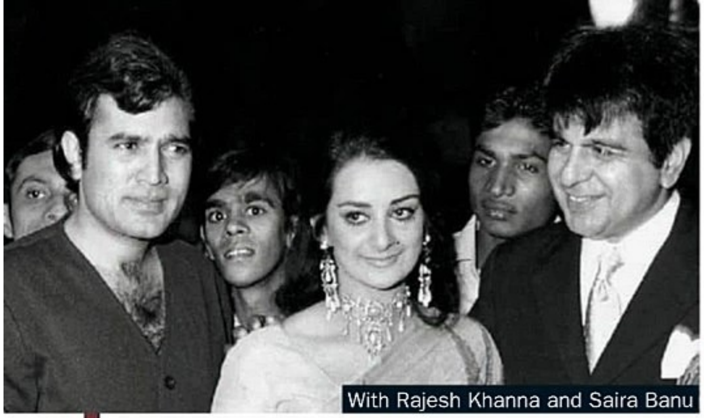
PEOPLE LOVED TO SEE DILIP KUMAR DIE ON SCREEN. HE WAS SICK OF IT EVEN IN THE '50S BUT THANKS TO THE BOX OFFICE SUCCESS OF FILMS LIKE *MELA*, *JOGAN* AND *DEEDAR*, HE WAS STAMPED AS A TRAGEDIST

①

②

① With Rajendra Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Manoj Kumar

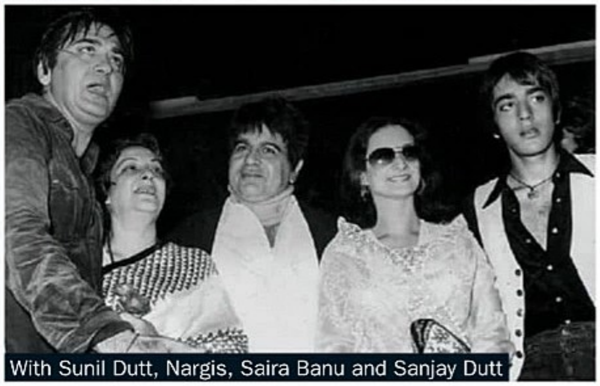
② With brother Nasir Khan and Nutan


With Rajesh Khanna and Saira Banu

> LIKE IN HIS FILMS, HE WAS A TRAGIC LOVER IN REAL LIFE TOO. KAMINI KAUSHAL, THE FIRST WOMAN HE WAS LINKED WITH, WAS ALREADY MARRIED. HIS AFFAIR WITH MADHUBALA FELL APART AFTER AN ACRIMONIOUS LAWSUIT

With Rajendra Kumar

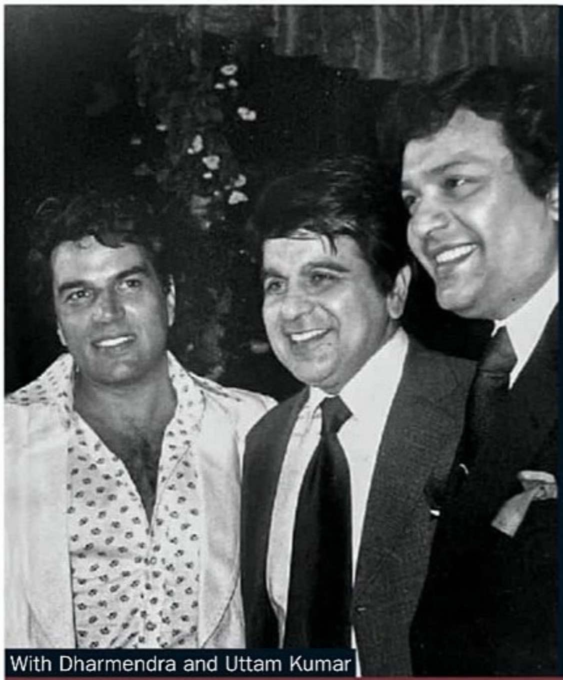
With BR Chopra, Dev Anand, and Nasir Hussain


With Sunil Dutt, Nargis, Saira Banu and Sanjay Dutt

(1994), Padma Bhushan (1991) and Padma Vibhushan (2015). The Government of Pakistan conferred on him their highest civilian honour, Nishan-e-Imtiaz (1998).

People loved to see Dilip Kumar die on screen. He was sick of it even in the '50s but thanks to the box office success of films like *Mela, Jogan* and *Deedar,* he was stamped as a tragedist and hence tragic-themed roles got written specially for him. His quicksilver eyes, handsome visage and soft voice added to the myth. Like in his films, he was a tragic lover in real life too. Kamini Kaushal, the

With Ashok Kumar


With Dharmendra and Uttam Kumar

With Raj Kapoor at a charity match

With Sanjeev Kumar

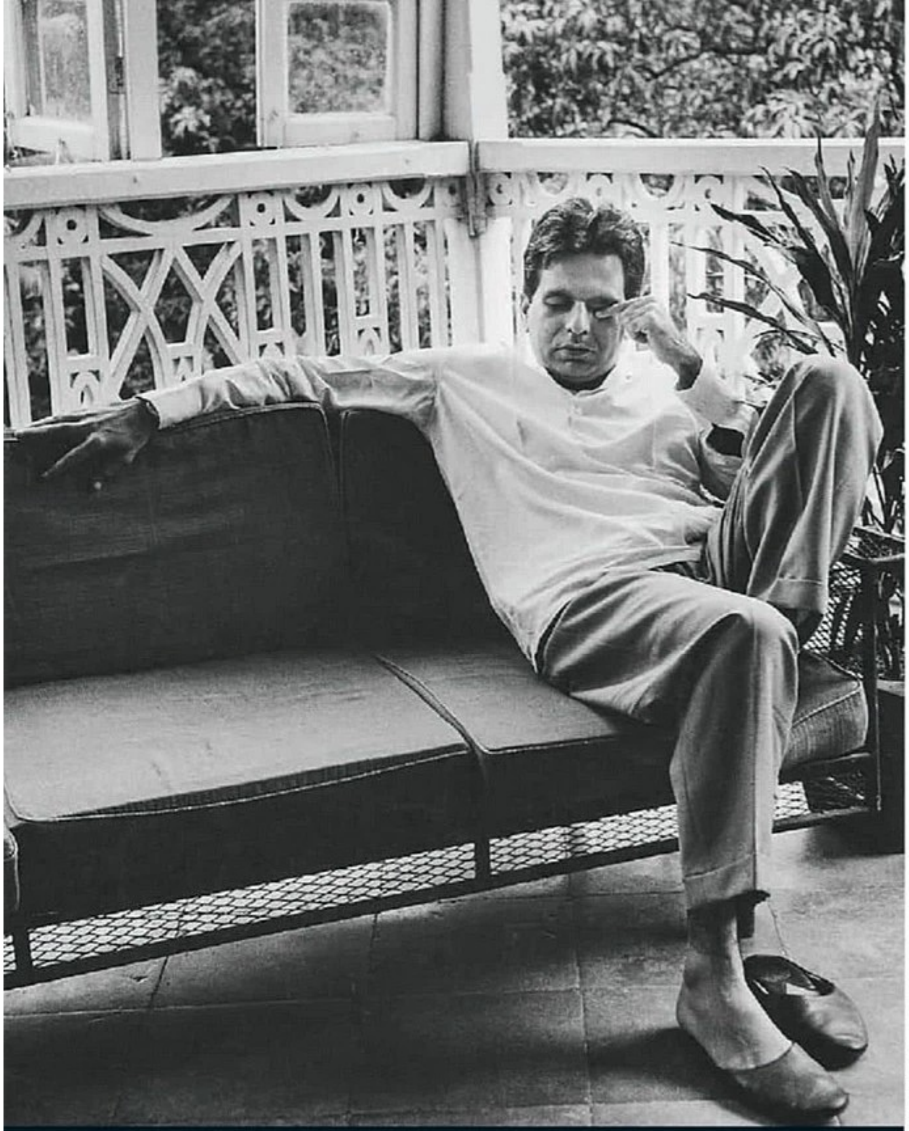
TRIVIA

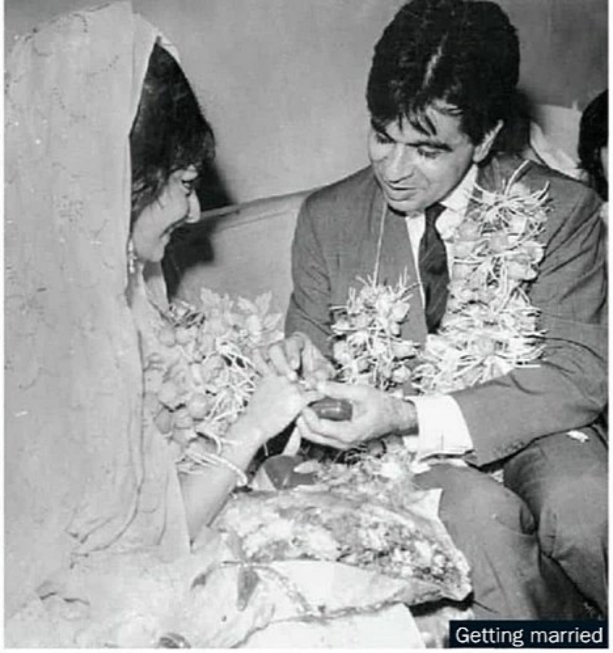
✶ He changed his name from Mohammed Yusuf Khan to Dilip Kumar at his mentor, Devika Rani's insistence, who wanted a more massy name for the debutant. Another reason, which he himself explained in an interview, was that he was afraid his father would beat him up if he came to know his son was joining films. His father used to frown upon the acting profession and hence Dilip Kumar dreaded his father's reaction.

✶ Despite his five-decade long career, Dilip Kumar, the original perfectionist of the Hindi film industry, did only 66 films in his entire career. He was always particular about his choice of films and reportedly never repeated a role.

✶ He was a staunch believer in realistic acting since the very beginning of his career and is said to have admired James Stewart, Paul Muni, Ingrid Bergman and Clark Gable for their naturalistic flair. He was often compared to the good looking Hollywood star Marlon Brando as like Brando, Dilip Kumar practiced method acting. In his interviews, he's said to have mentioned he predated Brando in cinema.

✶ He had a multi-talented personality. He was a staunch humanitarian, a well-read and articulate person who had command over both English and Urdu and was a natural orator.





Getting married

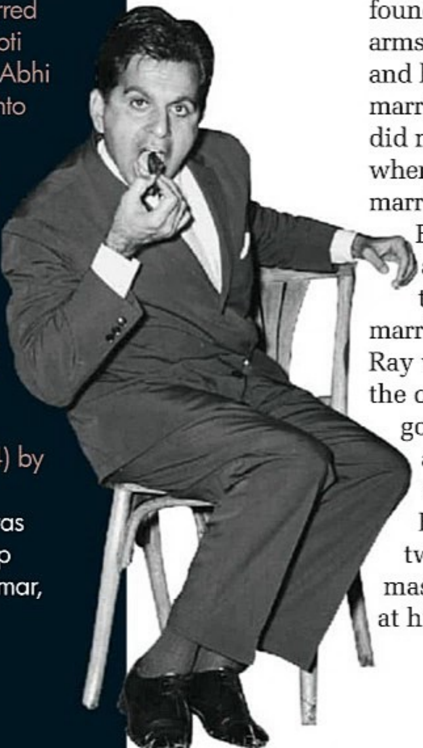
With Raj Kapoor

He was a connoisseur of Urdu literature in particular and knew several *ghazals* by rote. His style of poetry rendition was second to none. Not only was his diction and pronunciation perfect, he also used to offer his own take of what he recited. He was said to be fond of such poets as Ghalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmad Faraz and other greats.

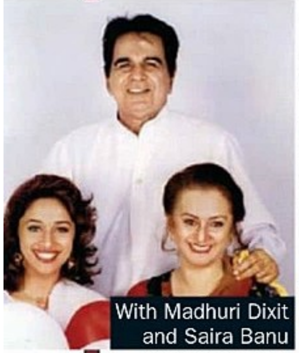
✶ The actor loved theatre and was fond of watching Marathi plays. He loved Marathi *sangeet natak* or musicals and usually went backstage to meet the cast after the show if he liked the performance. He was well-versed in Marathi and used to sing songs from Marathi plays if the mood took him. His favourite Marathi play was said to be *Ghashiram Kotwal*, written by Vijay Tendulkar.

⑥ He had a fondness for Bengali literature and culture. He featured in two Bengali movies, *Paari* (1963) and *Sagina Mahato* (1970). *Paari* was directed by Jagganath Chatterjee, and was adapted from a story by Jarasandha. Dilip Kumar played a jailor in an Andaman prison in the film. The film starred Dharmendra and Pronoti Roy and also featured Abhi Bhattacharya and Keshto Mukherjee. *Sagina Mahato* was directed by Tapan Sinha and starred Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu. Dilip Kumar played a union leader in the film, which was based on real-life events. It was later remade in Hindi as *Sagina* (1974) by Sinha himself.

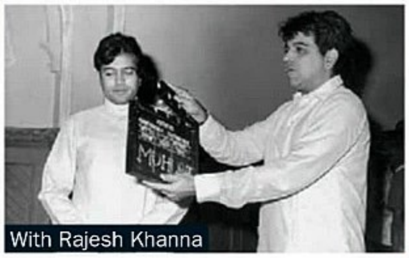
✶ It's said that there was acrimony between Dilip Kumar and Kishore Kumar, as the latter married first woman he was linked with, was already married. His affair with Madhubala fell apart after an acrimonious lawsuit. It didn't help that he confessed his love for her in court. He found true love at last in the arms of Saira Banu. She was 22 and he was 44 when they got married in 1966. The marriage did meet a severe bump when the news of his second marriage surfaced in the '80s. But it survived the storm and is regarded as one of the most stable showbiz marriages ever. It was Satyajit Ray who once named him as the complete method actor. He got engrossed in his roles and it was difficult for him to grow out of them. He stuck to doing one or two films a year to achieve mastery. He'd thrown a fit at his attire in BR Chopra's



> THOUGH HE NO LONGER GOT LEAD ROLES AT THE FAG END OF HIS CAREER IN THE '80S, HE MADE SURE HIS HISTRIONICS OVERSHADOWED THOSE IN THE LEAD

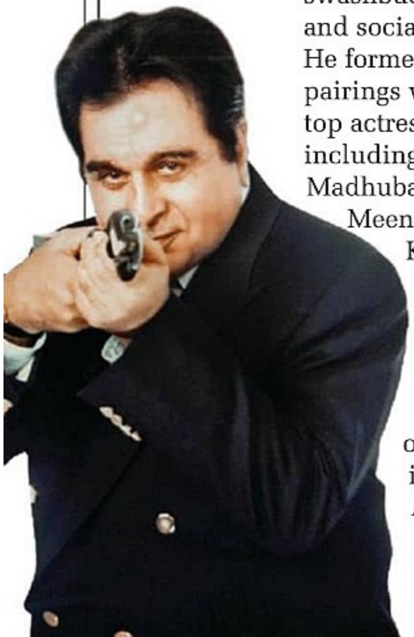

With Madhuri Dixit and Saira Banu

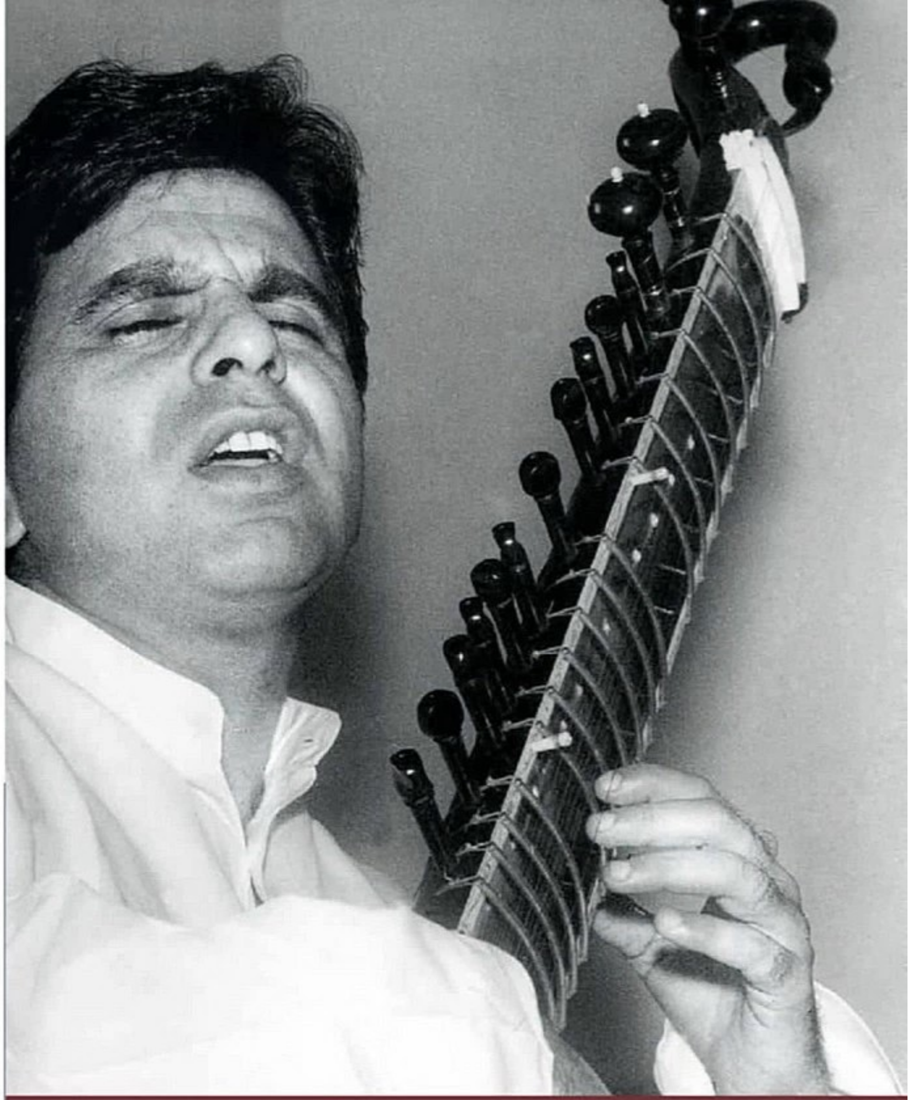
With Vyajayanthimala


With Rajesh Khanna

Naya Daur and threatened to walk out. It was only after he spent three hours in the outfit and character that he realised it was working for the film. He consulted Harley Street physicians to get rid of his obsession and was advised to do light-hearted film, resulting in him choosing swashbucklers like *Kohinoor* and social satires like *Leader*. He formed popular on-screen pairings with many of the top actresses at the time including Vyjayanthimala, Madhubala, Nargis, Nimmi, Meena Kumari and Kamini Kaushal.

Though he no longer got lead roles at the fag end of his career in the '80s, he made sure his histrionics overshadowed those in the lead. Films like *Mashaal*, *Shakti* or





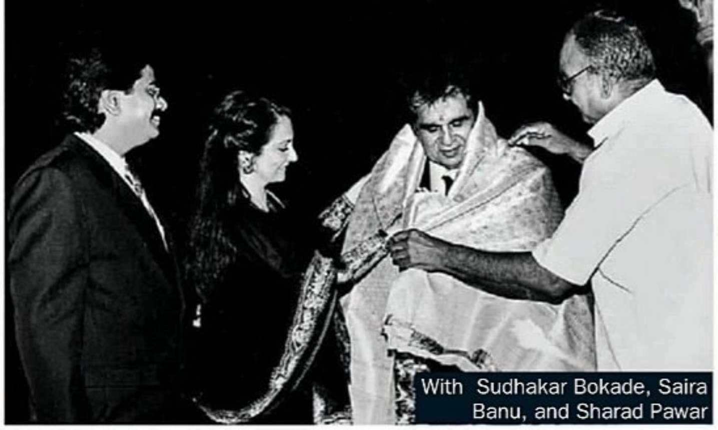
TRIVIA

Madhubala, said to be the love of Dilip Kumar's life. As a result, Kishore reportedly never gave playback for Dilip Kumar. But he did sing for Dilip Kumar in *Sagina*. The song *Saala main toh sahab ban gaya*, became an instant hit and is today considered one of the most popular songs of Kishore Kumar as well as Dilip Kumar.

✶ Dilip Kumar had a good singing voice and even sang the duet *Laagi naahin chhootey, chahe jiya jaaye* from *Musafir* (1957). The film was directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee and had music by Salil Choudhary. It's said Salil *da* wanted a new voice for this particular song, a duet with Lata Mangeshkar. He heard Dilip Kumar humming to himself and asked him if he was game to record a song in his own voice. Lata was initially sceptical but decided to go along with the experiment. Dilip proved to be pitch perfect and carried the song well. It's strange that he never sang in a film again after that.

✶ He reportedly said no to Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957), citing that the role was spiritually akin to his role in *Devdas* (1955) and he didn't want to repeat it. Some say he changed his mind after the *muhurat*. The story goes he didn't turn up for the shoot on the first day. The crew kept waiting. When it became clear that he wouldn't turn up for the shoot, Guru Dutt donned the greasepaint for the film. It was certainly a loss for the audience. Guru Dutt-Dilip Kumar pairing would have been

With Haji Mastan and Madhubala lookalike Sona


With Sudhakar Bokade, Saira Banu, and Sharad Pawar

With Vilasrao Deshmukh

With Jackie Shroff and Jugal Hansraj

With magician PC Sarcar

With Rekha and Padmini Kolhapure

tremendous.

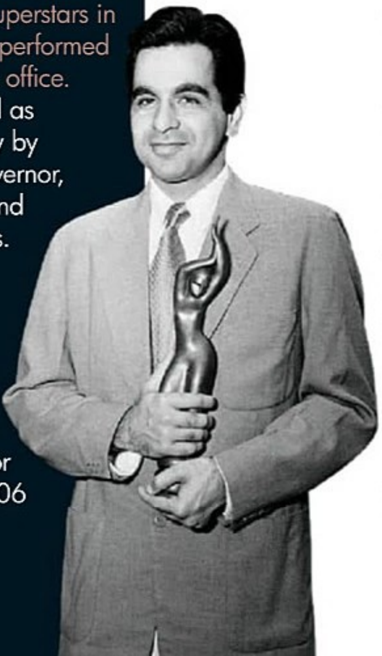
✶ The actor was approached by British director David Lean for the role of Sherif Ali in his movie *Lawrence Of Arabia* (1962). Dilip Kumar declined the offer allegedly because he was unsure how he'd be treated in a big-budget Hollywood film. The role then went to Egyptian actor Omar Sharif.

✶ Dilip Kumar and Nutan were working on a film called *Shikwa* (1954), which had him playing an undertrial army officer. Unfortunately, the film couldn't be completed and we missed the opportunity to see two stalwarts come together on screen in their prime. The duo didn't sign a film together till Subhash Ghai's *Karma* (1986) came along. The film had them playing husband and wife and the audience loved their chemistry together.

✶ After the success of *Andaz* (1949), Raj Kapoor came to Dilip Kumar with the idea of *Sangam*. However, it's said the duo couldn't see eye to eye about which role they were supposed to play in the love triangle. The film was later made with Rajendra Kumar and Vyajayanthimala in 1964. The actor wasn't fond of multi-starrers while in his prime. Apart from *Andaz*, he didn't do a film with Raj Kapoor. He only did one film with Dev Anand called *Insaniyat* (1955), which was a period drama. Incredibly, despite having two superstars in the star cast, the film performed below par at the box office.

Filmfare
75

✶ He was appointed as the Sheriff of Bombay by the Maharashtra Governor, Sadiq Ali, in 1979 and served for three years. He was nominated as a member of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Parliament of India, by the Indian National Congress for the period 2000–2006 from Maharashtra.



Karma wouldn't have been half the films they were, if not for his towering presence. And in *Saudagar,* he (along with Raaj Kumar), showed the world that lions could still rule in old age too. He took upon an ambitious project called *Kalinga* to direct but his perfectionist streak coupled with producer Sudhakar Bokade's paucity of funds made sure it never saw the light of the day.

He was said to be suffering from Alzheimer's disease for the last few years. His younger brother Nasir Khan (1924–1974) was also a noted film actor. Two of his younger brothers died during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aslam Khan died at the age of 88 in August 2020, and Ehsan Khan died at 90 in September 2020. The thespian was admitted to Mumbai's Hinduja Hospital in June as he complained of breathlessness. He died in the morning on July 7 after battling prolonged illness. Doctors who were treating the veteran actor, said he was suffering from advanced prostate cancer that had spread to other organs. He's survived by his wife Saira Banu. He may have passed away but will remain alive in our memories forever. ■

FAREWELL DILIP SAAB

AMITABH BACHCHAN REMEMBERS **DILIP KUMAR**

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM HIS BLOG

You sit and review.. thoughts of the years gone by… of the times with the departed… and the memory sparkles in its brightest and reveals the visuals and times. In those early years, when cinema was an illusion for us at age 12… in the '50s it was the privileged few among the group of friends that went surreptitiously into cinema halls, saw films and came back to our little 'adda' to narrate in heightened excitement the story and the visuals that were witnessed by him… smitten with the narration we sat and made our own impressions…

And then one day… you actually entered that darkened hall and saw first hand what had been heard and narrated… and found yourself mouth open in awed emotion… We now had our own ability to narrate the narration… and the sense of superiority in its multiple variants engulfed us

And… in that bubble of vacuumed superiority one name kept floating about in the resonance of our verbosity… Dilip Kumar. And then strangely on a family vacation in 1954 or 1955 to Nepal, Kathmandu there came an evening when the hosts brought us with his aides, an opportunity to visit a cinema theatre, to see a film… The name cannot be remembered.. but the vision does… and the name that had been floating in that vacuum suddenly took shape, right there on the screen in front of me… large and in black and white… that name, that visual often repeated in converse… Dilip Kumar…

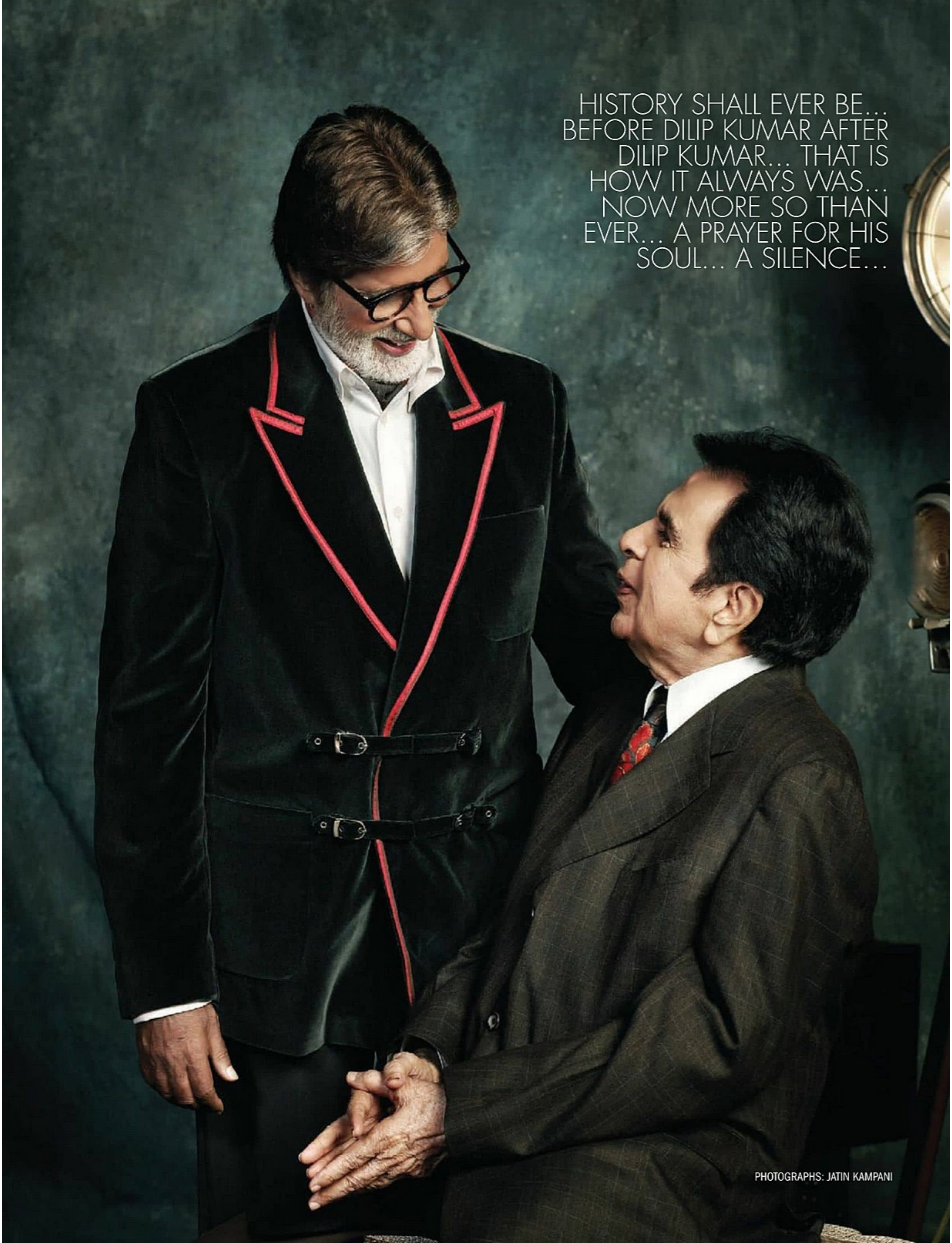
There was something in his presence… when he appeared all others became a blurred focus… when he spoke, you felt right, convinced… and you came back with all of that home… and it remained with you.

Going to the theatre again, more so the ones in Hindi were not allowed… it was more the fairy tale stories of English nursery in film that was our permissible content…

And then another vacation to Bombay in the 1960s and a random visit to a restaurant in

THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HIS PRESENCE… WHEN HE APPEARED ALL OTHERS BECAME A BLURRED FOCUS… WHEN HE SPOKE, YOU FELT RIGHT, CONVINCED… AND YOU CAME BACK WITH ALL OF THAT HOME… AND IT REMAINED WITH YOU.

Shakti



HISTORY SHALL EVER BE... BEFORE DILIP KUMAR AFTER DILIP KUMAR... THAT IS HOW IT ALWAYS WAS... NOW MORE SO THAN EVER... A PRAYER FOR HIS SOUL... A SILENCE...

PHOTOGRAPHS: JATIN KAMPANI

the megapolis ... and there he was, near the entrance speaking to the owner of the place we were at... after long contemplation which drove me to awe and shivering excitement, I decided to approach him for an autograph... but no autograph book... so out again in the street, a book bought and inside the restaurant again and the relief to still find him there... the walk up to him... he is concentrating on conversation... I push my words to him in general and the book in hand... there is no reaction... he did not even look at me or the book... and after a short while walked away, out through the door and gone... the autograph book still in my vacant hands...

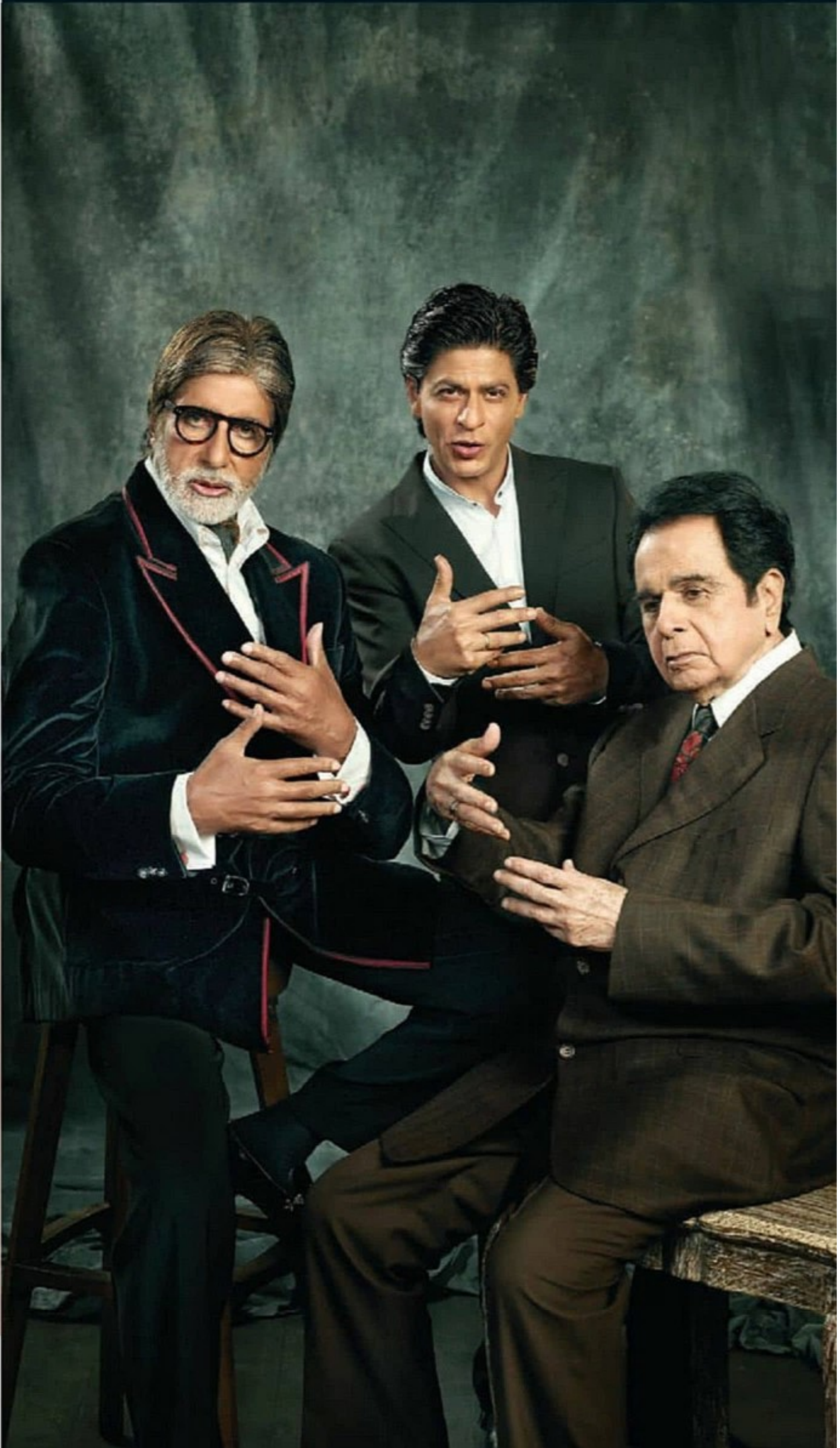
The autograph book was not important at all... it was his presence... that's it... From then on it became a known story so any reference towards it would be a repetition of what you already know... know from your point... know in general... but actually knowing, was the observation in our maturity...

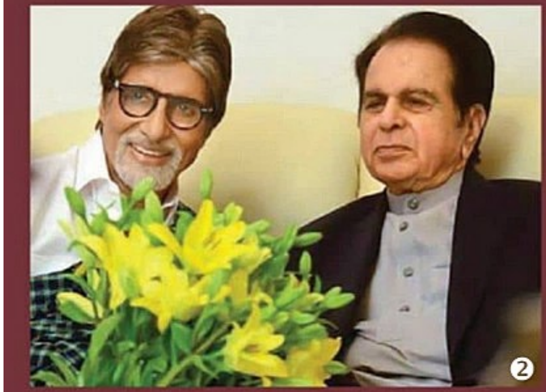
You never found a single element out of place when he performed on screen or in his non public appearance, or even the public appearance... His eyes, his walk, his every limb, his every spoken word was like poetry... the graph and the tone, the pauses, the rapid fire, the run by a train, that glass of sorrow and the inconsequential and consequential expressions of learning... and then...

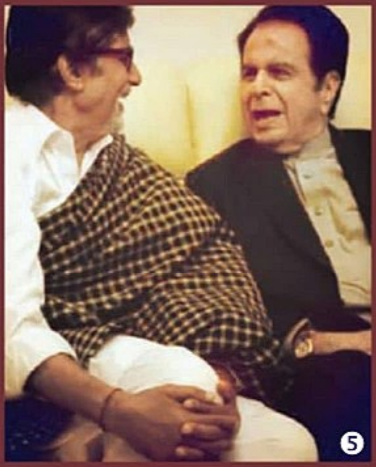
...Then that character of the birthplace province, Uttar Pradesh, Awadh, and I continue with the admiration... his presence is not as inconsequentially fluid as the others that were about him, it was it... never could you fault or destroy his power of observation and delivery on screen... there was no alternative... that is how it was meant to be...

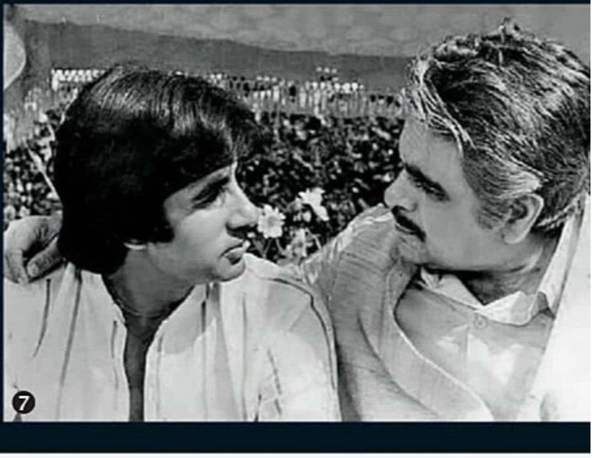
❶

YOU NEVER FOUND A SINGLE ELEMENT OUT OF PLACE WHEN HE PERFORMED ON SCREEN OR IN HIS NON PUBLIC APPEARANCE, OR EVEN THE PUBLIC APPEARANCE... HIS EYES, HIS WALK, HIS EVERY LIMB, HIS EVERY SPOKEN WORD WAS LIKE POETRY...









①With Dharmendra, Aamir Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and Saira Banu at the launch of his biography

②With Amitabh Bachchan

③ With The Bachchan family

④ With Raaj Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan

⑤ With Amitabh Bachchan

⑥ With Laxmikant and his wife and Amitabh Bachchan

⑦ With Amitabh Bachchan in *Shakti*

THANK YOU CINEMA… THANK YOU… WE CAN SEE HIM WHENEVER WE WISH TO… IN OUR HOMES, IN OTHERS HOMES, IN THE PALM OF OUR HANDS… WE SHALL AND CAN SEE HIM… SEE HIM TO OBSERVE WHAT HE LEFT BEHIND FOR US ALL AND LEARN…

...The film *Gunga Jumna*… and the bubble inside has burst... he is real... he is not an actor ..he is real... he is he...

...How did he do it.. a mystery in the realm of performance... and the confirmation that there can never be another...

Years pass by.. several associations, conversations and presence in his company... him by your side in film as well...

...And today... I stand in front of this mound on the earth, freshly dug... a few garlands and flowers scattered about over the mound... and no one around him...

...He sleeps underneath... under the earth of his bearing... it is peaceful and quiet... This large presence... this mountain of talent... this gregarious creative visionary... this excellence of the excelled... the ultimate... now reduced to a small mound of grave...

He is gone…

...And the world has not stopped... it has been in constant move... and move we do... as do many others to everyday life... in remembrance of his words and performance... his every little detail that you spent with him... he has gone, but not those remembrances...

...Thank you cinema... thank you... we can see him whenever we wish to... in our homes, in others homes, in the palm of our hands... we shall and can see him... see him to observe what he left behind for us all and learn...

...History shall ever be... before Dilip Kumar after Dilip Kumar... that is how it always was... now more so than ever...

A prayer for his soul... a silence…

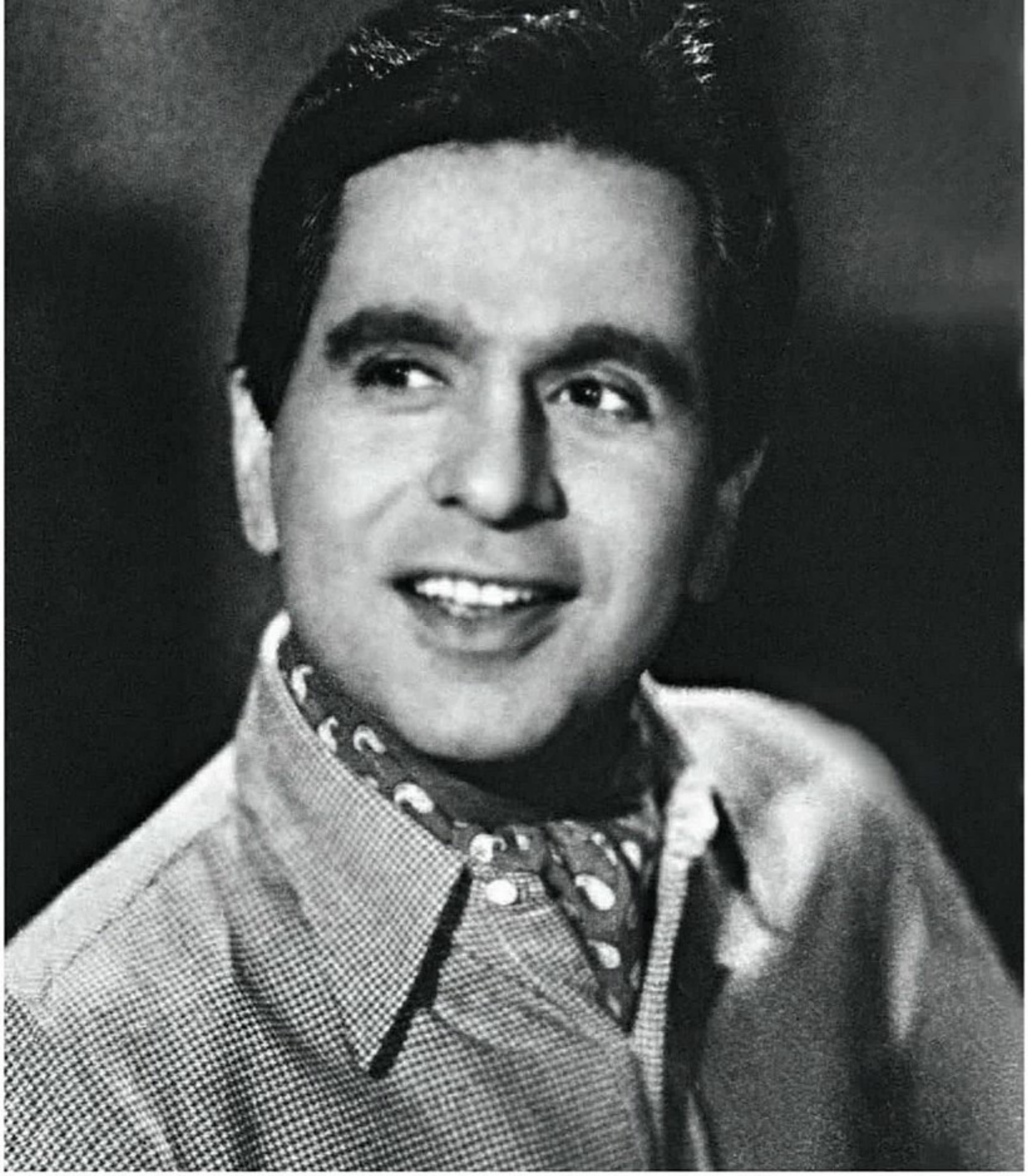
I WAS HIS EKLAVYA

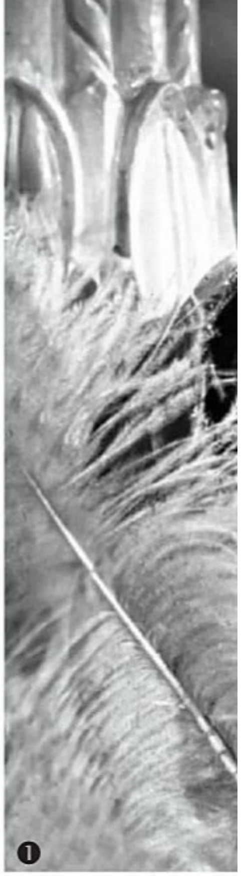
SHABANA AZMI PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE LATE DILIP KUMAR

That Dilip Kumar was a great actor is as obvious as stating that the sky is blue and the grass is green. What is it that makes Dilip Kumar undisputedly the best? That he has left his stamp on generations of actors after him? That he introduced a style of acting which was unique to his times understated, deeply felt and 'in the moment, remarkable in its stillness at a time when speaking dialogue in a theatrical way accompanied by broad gesticulation was the norm? That and so much more.

What is the measure for a good actor? Acting is not like a horse race where the one who runs the fastest is judged the best. A most definitive Hamlet can be a disastrous Othello. So the hallmark of a good actor is versatility and in that Dilip *Saheb* was supreme. Watch him as the swashbuckling hero in *Aan*, the tragic hero in *Devdas* or in varied roles as disparate as

> DILIP KUMAR INTRODUCED A STYLE OF ACTING WHICH WAS UNIQUE TO HIS TIMES UNDERSTATED, DEEPLY FELT AND 'IN THE MOMENT, REMARKABLE IN ITS STILLNESS AT A TIME WHEN SPEAKING DIALOGUE IN A THEATRICAL WAY ACCOMPANIED BY BROAD GESTICULATION WAS THE NORM





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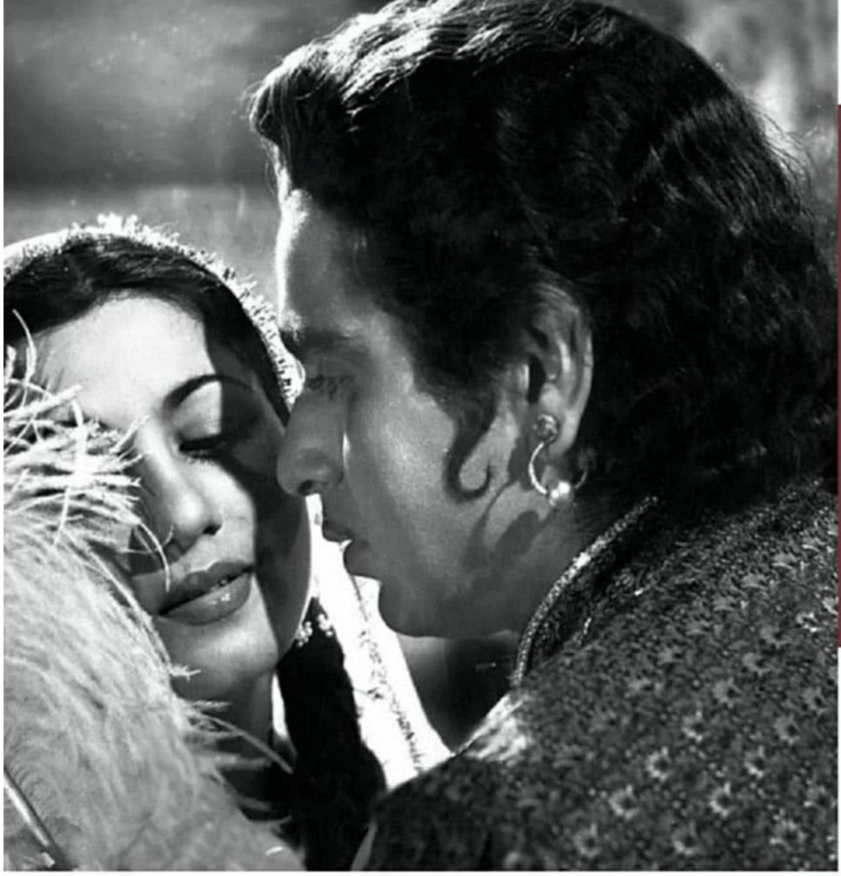
DILIP *SAHEB* MADE AN EFFORT TO EXPAND HIS HORIZONS AND ENRICH HIS PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE - HE READ BOOKS, ATTENDED *MUSHAIRAS*, LEARNED TO APPRECIATE CLASSICAL MUSIC, PLAYED FOOTBALL AND CRICKET BUT ABOVE ALL HE KEPT HIMSELF SOCIALLY ENGAGED AS A CITIZEN

Andaz, Kohinoor, Mughal-e-Azam and Gunga Jumna. He could inhabit the world of any character he played, often at peril to himself... Legend has it that Dilip *Saheb* was so deeply impacted by *Devdas* that he had to seek the help of a psychiatrist to draw him out of the well of depression he had fallen into… He had lived the part, as Stanislavski says. I have no idea whether he had studied method acting. He did not go to any training institute but he became an institution in himself for generations of actors that followed him.

Acting is a very rewarding profession - you give yourself to the character you play; in turn the character leaves its imprint on you. The richer your personal experience, the broader your world view, the more depth you can give to the character. Dilip *Saheb* made an effort to expand his horizons and enrich his perspective on life - he read books, attended *mushairas,* learned to appreciate



DURING THE BOMBAY RIOTS I WATCHED HIM TURN HIS HOUSE INTO A VIRTUAL RELIEF AND REHABILITATION CENTRE. IT WAS A MASSIVE OPERATION TO DELIVER FOOD EVERYDAY TO THE RIOT VICTIMS SCATTERED IN VARIOUS RELIEF CAMPS ALL OVER THE CITY, IN TIMES OF CURFEW

③

① *Mughal-e-Azam*

② Shabana Azmi with Dilip Kumar and Sharad Pawar

③ *Gunga Jumna*

②

classical music, played football and cricket but above all he kept himself socially engaged as a citizen. Whether it was as a patron of National Association for the Blind, or mobilizing citizens for communal harmony, he was always in the forefront. And this was at a time when it was a rarity for film stars to be invested in socio-political issues. During the Bombay riots I watched him turn his house into a virtual relief and rehabilitation centre. It was a massive operation to deliver food everyday to the riot victims scattered in various relief camps all over the city, in times of curfew. He led like a General, ably assisted by his devoted wife Saira Banu*ji*.

Today, I find that stardom confines stars within an ivory tower -- with concentric circles of protective barriers - managers, secretaries, PR companies, make-up artists, hairdressers, security guards etc that build an impenetrable fortress around them. How then, can they keep in touch with what is happening outside this rarefied circle?

An artiste's resource base must be life itself and unless a special effort is made to stay in touch with the grass roots, there is a danger that the actor will lose out to the star.

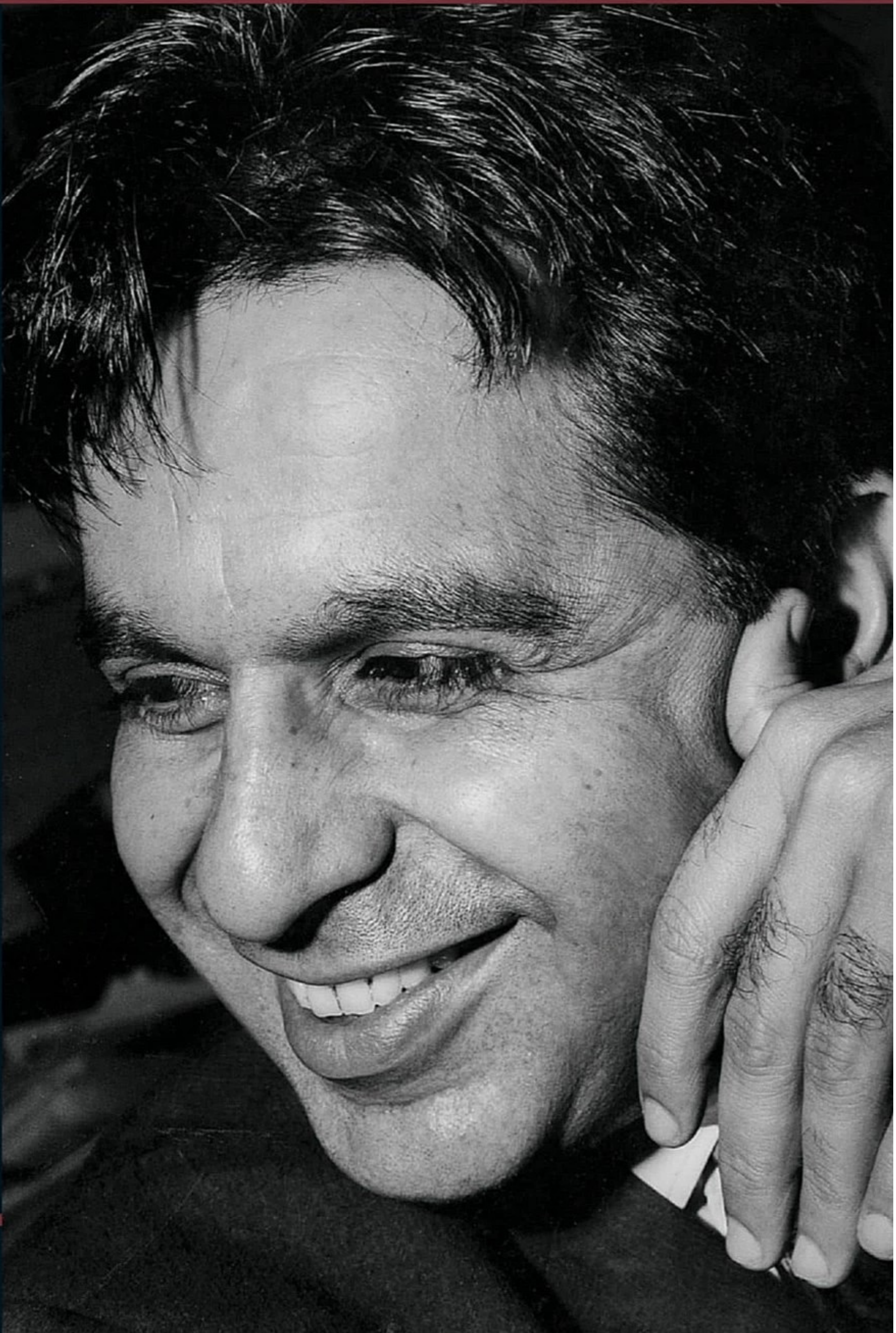
Dilip *Saheb* undoubtedly was both...an actor and a star... his persona was formidable - erudite, refined and dignified. His roles were carefully chosen to keep that persona intact. He never stooped to chase his heroine in a manner that could even vaguely be interpreted as eve-teasing, he never cracked a low joke or indulged in double-meaning dialogue in the name of entertainment. He could be both enigmatic and accessible at will, a quality that served him well in the well-crafted characters he played.

Unknown to him, I was his Eklavya, I watched him from afar and learned many life lessons. I will always remain grateful… ■

#RIPDILIP

MAYUKH MAJUMDAR COMPILES THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Popularly known as Bollywood's First Khan, Mohammed Yusuf Khan aka Dilip Kumar was the blueprint for actors across India's many film industries. He passed away on July 7 at the age of 98 and celebrities across the country shared their tributes for the acting legend on social media. Some like Shah Rukh Khan, Johnny Lever, Dharmendra, Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan and Vidya Balan even went to his Bandra home to pay their last respects to the tragedy king. Below, we've compiled a few of these social media tributes.



KUMAR

TRIBUTES TO BOLLYWOOD'S FIRST KHAN **DILIP KUMAR**

CHIRANJEEVI

"An Era comes to an END in the Indian Film Industry.Deeply Saddened by the passing of LEGEND #DilipKumar Saab. One of the GREATEST Actors India has ever produced, an Acting Institution & a National Treasure. Enthralled the world for several decades.May his soul Rest in Peace."

MOHANLAL

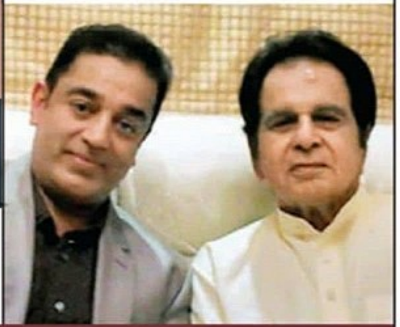
"Dilip Kumar*ji* was the doyen of Indian Cinema and will forever be remembered. Condolences to his family and friends. May the legend's soul rest in eternal peace."

RANVEER SINGH

"💔"

KAMAL HAASAN

"Dililp Kumar *saheb*. A career that teaches many actors like me a standard and commitment to maintain in their performance. Truly one of the greatest actors of India leaves us today but leaves us with a treasure trove of his brilliance through his acting. His understated approach is still tried by contemporary actors who are brave enough to attempt it."

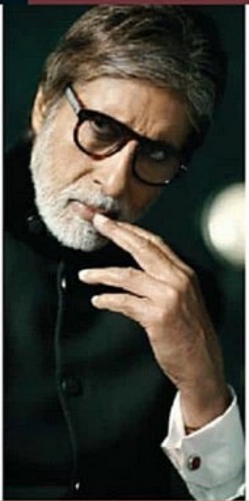


ABHISHEK BACHCHAN

"I clearly remember my father (Amitabh Bachchan) telling me that it took him over a decade to have the honour of sharing screen space with his idol. And here I was given that opportunity in my debut film. He told me to cherish this opportunity and to learn and observe as much as I could by watching the master at work. A film in which I get to work with my idol's idol. How lucky was I? Today, an entire era of cinema came to an end. Thankfully many generations will be able to watch and learn but most importantly enjoy and respect the immense talent of Dilip *sahab* through his movies. We thank you for blessing us with your work, wisdom, talent and love."

SHABANA AZMI

"Adieu Dilip *Saab*. Unknown to you I have been your Eklavya.Thank you for the movies.Thank you for the language. Thank you for the dignity. Thank you for being socially responsible.Thank you."



AMITABH BACHCHAN

"An institution has gone .. whenever the history of Indian Cinema will be written , it shall always be 'before Dilip Kumar, and after Dilip Kumar' .. My duas for peace of his soul and the strength to the family to bear this loss. Deeply saddened. An epic era has drawn curtains... Never to happen again.."

AJAY DEVGN

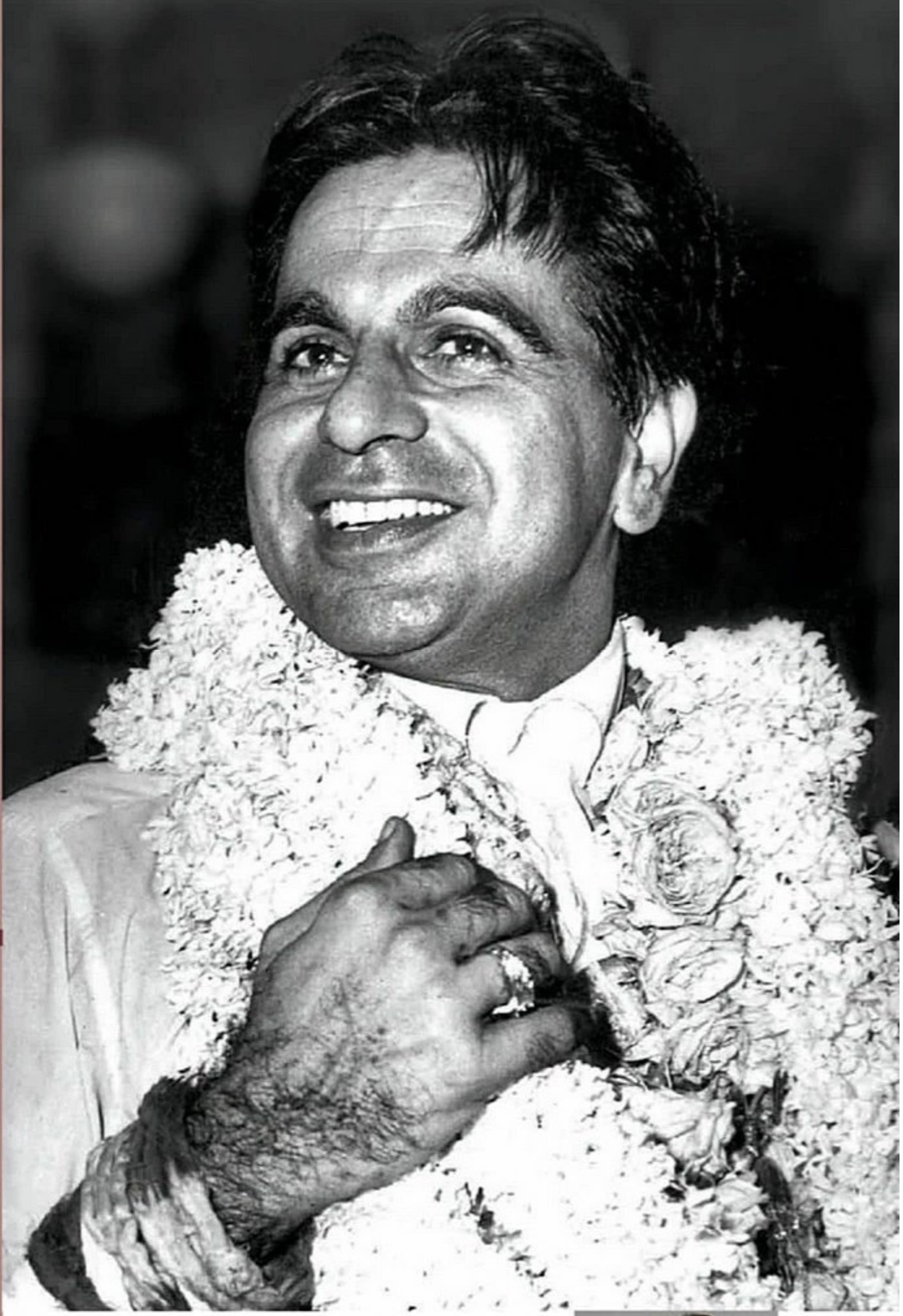
"Shared many moments with the legend...some very personal, some on stage. Yet, nothing really prepared me for his passing away. An institution, a timeless actor. Heartbroken. Deepest condolences to Saira*ji*."

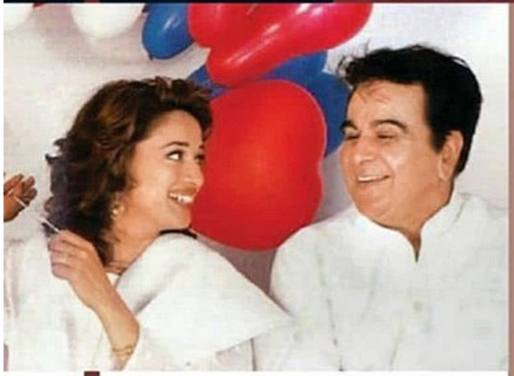
VARUN DHAWAN

"DILIP KUMAR *SAAB*. Greatness rip. My father always told me Dilip *saab* is the greatest actor in the world. Watching his movies is an education for any artist. *Gopi, Gunga Jumna, Ram Aur Shyam* and *Devdas* just to name a few introduced us to so many new genres while he effortlessly performed each character. Thank you. On himself – "I know and live with the real Dilip Kumar. He is a simple man, hard-working, who has survived time."

SUDHIR MISHRA

"Many many years ago Dilip *Saab* had called some of us to his house. I remember Ketan Mehta and Govind Nihalani being there among others. He wanted us to make short films on communal harmony. I wish we had taken a picture! What a man. What an actor!





MADHURI DIXIT NENE

"Every now & then some individuals come along who single-handedly alter the present & write history... One such legend was Dilip *saab* for the world of cinema. I was fortunate to have spent some time with him both on & off screen and I'll cherish those memories forever. Praying for the peace of his departed soul & my heartfelt condolence to the family."

ALLU ARJUN

"Legendary Dilip Kumar garu no more. May his soul rest in peace. His contribution to Indian Cinema is unparalleled. An inspiration to actors across generations and generations to come. Dilip *Saab* will always be cherished, celebrated & missed."

KABIR BEDI

"The passing of legendary Dilip Kumar truly marks the end of an era. He was the last to leave of Bollywood's triumvirate of iconic superstars: Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand #DilipKumar, all of whom I had the honour of knowing. Rest in peace, Dilip *Saab*. Your films have immortalised you."

MAHESH BABU

"A timeless legend... His towering brilliance will continue to be an inspiration to actors all around the world. A huge loss for Indian cinema...Rest in peace #DilipKumar Sir. You will be terribly missed."

AKSHAY KUMAR

"To the world many others may be heroes. To us actors, he was The Hero. #DilipKumar Sir has taken an entire era of Indian cinema away with him. My thoughts and prayers are with his family. Om Shanti."

PRIYANKA CHOPRA

""हक़ हमेशा सर झुका के नहीं... सर उठा के मांगा जाता है।" - सौदागर

यूसुफ साहब ने ज़िन्दगी सर उठा के जी है। उनसे मिलने का मौका बहुत कम लोगों को मिला था, लेकिन उनमे से एक खुशनसीब मैं हूँ। जबसे मैंने सायरा जी और यूसुफ साहब को जाना है मुझे उनसे सिर्फ और सिर्फ प्यार और दुआऐं मिली है। उनसे मिलना, कुछ हलकी बातें करना, मैं अपनी ज़िन्दगी के कुछ सबसे हसीन पलों में गिनती हूँ।

Yusuf *Saab's* contribution to the Arts is invaluable and irreplaceable. Today the curtains have come down on one of India's greatest. An end of an era. My condolences to Saira ma'am and the family. Rest in peace."

SIDDHARTH MALHOTRA

"One of the greatest actors the world has ever known has left us. A giant tree has fallen. I pray for the soul of legend #DilipKumar sahab. I also pray today's generation learns about and celebrates him. He is forever."

DHARMENDRA

"Dosto, Dalip Sahab ki rukhsati par... mere... aap ke runde runde jazbaat ye... uss Azeem fankar... uss neek rooh insaan ko... ek Shradhanjali hai. woh chale gaye... un ki yaadein na ja payegi" "Saira ne jab kaha.'' Dharam, dekho Sahab ne paplak jhapki hai, Dosto, jaan nikal gai meri. Maalik mere pyaare bhai ko jannat naseeb kare. Dosto , mujhe dikhwa nahin aata lekin main apne jazbaat par qaaboo bhi nahin paata. Apne samajh ke kah jaata hoon..."

ANIL KAPOOR

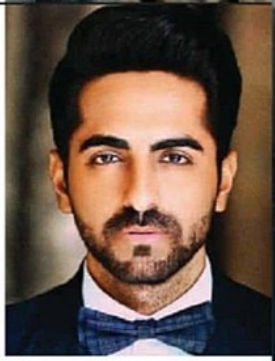
"Our world is a little less bright today because one of our brightest stars has left us for the heavens. Dilip *Sahab* was very close to my father and I had the tremendous honor of sharing screen-space with him in 3 of my most memorable films...He was and will always be the finest & greatest actor of our industry for me...he has inspired generations of artists. Rest in peace Dilip *Sahab*. You remain in our minds and hearts forever..."

SHAHIDKAPOOR

"We are all nothing but versions of you Dilip *Saab*. Every actor has studied you in awe. Wondering how you did it all. You were as close to PERFECT as it can get. As you return to your spiritual home. The prayers of millions are with you. Thank you for giving us all you did. And sharing your enlightened soul with us through all your breathtaking performances. You will live on forever sir. You are TIMELESS. Rest in peace."

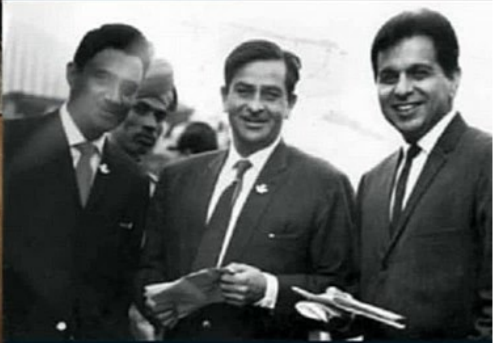
AYUSHMANN KHURRANA

"मेरी दादी को बहुत प्यार था दिलीप साहब से. She impersonated him in her 60s. She used to secretly take her sons for his film screenings, because my grandfather detested cinema. Because of this strong influence, my father has been an ardent worshipper of his since his infanthood. In our household Dilip Kumar is no less than God. Acting की शुरुआत तो उन्ही से हुई थी।
Be it comedy, tragedy or romance, he mastered every emotion and being a linguist he presented a perfect prototype of a superstar. Thank you for everything Yusuf *Saab*."



JANHVI KAPOOR

"Dilip *Saab*. I have never seen an actor embody silent dignity the way that you did in *Mughal-e-Azam*, or look at their lover with as much honesty and devotion as you looked at Anarkali. Never have I seen madness in an actor's eyes the way that I saw in yours in *Andaz*, one that was founded in pain. Or do comedy like you did in *Ram Aur Shyam* with a stillness and an ease that was never typically associated with humour. Everything you did felt like it was grounded in truth. The most dignified, evolved and perceptive screen presence I have ever had the pleasure of watching. Thank you for everything you have imparted to us through your iconic work, your wisdom and your words. You are enormously responsible for encouraging Indian cinema to recognise and value a new kind of artist. One who knows and represents the people with sensitivity and awareness. For encouraging progress towards realism and truth and showing us that even that can be larger than life, showing us that honesty is what people fall in love with. #RIP Dilip *Saab*- you are truly irreplaceable. And thank you."



KARISMA KAPOOR

"The legendary trio."

BEST FILMS OF DILIP KUMAR

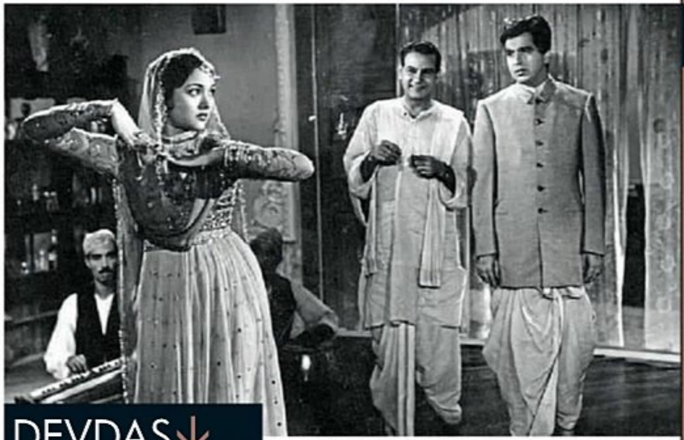
DEVESH SHARMA TAKES A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC FILMS OF THESPIAN **DILIP KUMAR**

Dilip Kumar will remain the gold standard when it comes to acting. He's largely known as a tragedian but could turn his hand at anything really and make acting look easy. Long before we were introduced to actors like Marlon Brando or Meryl Streep, we had our own Dilip Kumar. He was a method actor before the term got spoken about in hushed tones by our actors. He was a perfectionist to a fault and maybe because of that did only some 60-plus films in his career spanning five decades. While each film can be considered a gem, we've picked the best of the lot to reacquaint the readers with his genius...

←MUGHAL-E-AZAM

1960

It's said that K Asif read a play by Imtiaz Ali Taj in 1944 and originally decided to cast Chandramohan, D.K. Sapru and Nargis for the roles of Salim, Akbar and Anarkali respectively, the roles later made immortal by Dilip Kumar, Prithviraj Kapoor and Madhubala. The film went hugely over-budget and was made on a cost of over 1.5 crores, making it the costliest Hindi film ever produced when adjusted to inflation. Asif also suffered from the fact that Madhubala and Dilip Kumar were having a huge lover's tiff and weren't talking to each other as a result. But still, the screen sizzled when they came together in a scene. Case in point is the ostrich feather sequence, said to be the most romantic scene ever filmed. Madhubala was suffering from congenital heart disease and wanted a role of substance before she died. She got her wish as the film is counted as her best work.



DEVDAS↓

1955

Bimal Roy was the cameraman for the PC Barua-directed *Devdas* (1936) and was itching to make his own version. He chose Dilip Kumar as the tragic lover and such was Kumar's dedication to the role that it's said he had to consult shrinks to get out of the character. It's also said that Vyjayanthimala, who was renowned as a dancer, was taken seriously as a dramatic actor after the release of this film. Roy took cinematic liberties from both the original and Sharat Chandra Chatterjee's novel. There is no scene where Paro and Chandramukhi meet either in the novel or the original film. But here they fleetingly see each other and guess each other's identity in Roy's *Devdas*. Bengali actress Suchitra Sen, known for her natural ease in front of the camera was introduced to Hindi film audience through this film as Parvati, while Vyjayanthimala played Chandramukhi, the nautch girl with a heart of gold.

MELA

1948

Dilip became the tragedy king after *Mela*. The film had Nargis as Dilip's co-star and the duo played star-crossed lovers to perfection. Its memorable songs like *Yeh zindagi ke mele,* sung by Mohammed Rafi (it marked the beginning of a beautiful partnership between the actor and the singer), *Gaaye ja geet milan ke,* sung by Mukesh, rule the airwaves even now. Naushad and lyricist Shakeel Badayuni too cemented their partnership as Dilip's regulars.

←NAYA DAUR

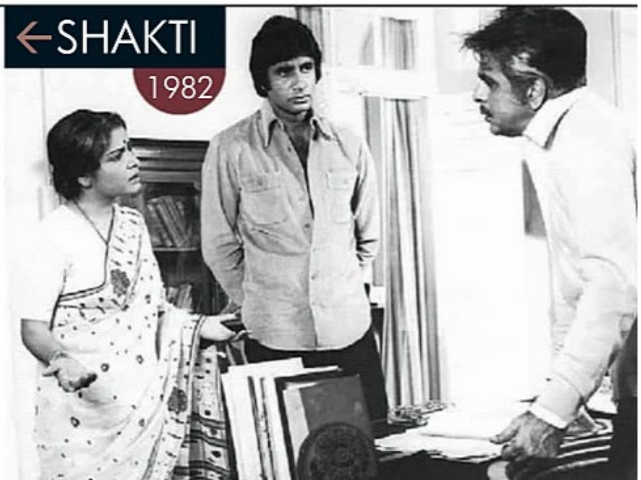
1957

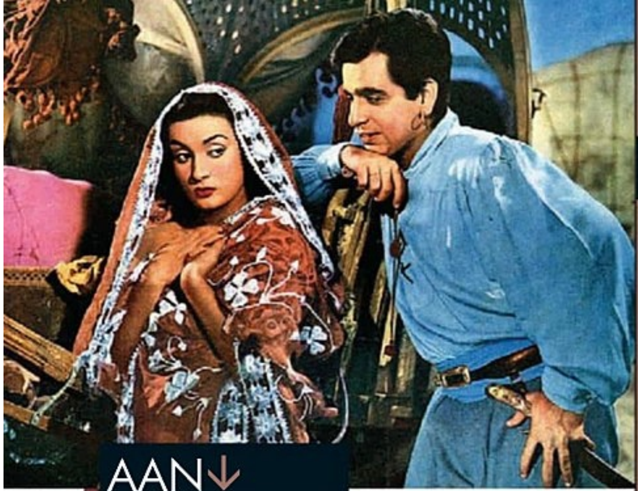
Naya Daur was heavily influenced by BR Chopra's Marxist beliefs and spoke against the rampant industrialisation of our vastly agrarian society. Industry colleagues thought he was making a documentary. The film united Vyjayanthimala with Dilip Kumar after *Devdas* and the duo went on to make many successful films after that. The film's message that we should consider our population an asset and should go towards a labour-incentive model for development found favour with the Nehruvian policies. The highlight of the film was the race between a bus and *tonga*, with Vyjayanthimala and Ajit valiantly supporting the bridge he had hacked off in a fit of jealous rage.

←SHAKTI

1982

DCP Ashwini Kumar (Dilip Kumar) is an honest police officer who always puts his principles above everything. One day, his son Vijay (Amitabh Bachchan) is kidnapped but the police officer refuses to meet the demands of the kidnappers even if it means the end of his son's life. Vijay somehow escapes but the memory of the incident scars him for life. He starts resenting his father who was willing to sacrifice his own son. Vijay goes on to become a gangster and the case to arrest him is assigned to his own father. The film pitted Amitabh Bachchan against his idol Dilip Kumar and the stand-off scenes between the two legends were goosebumps-inducing indeed. Some rate this Ramesh Sippy film as being better than his *Sholay.*

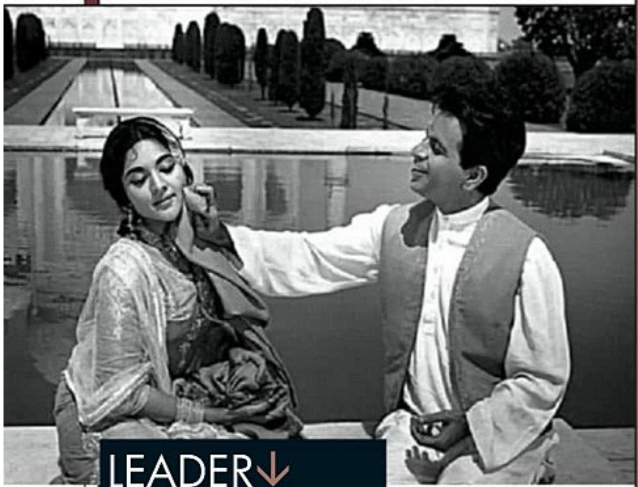




AAN↓

1953

This was director Mehboob Khan's swashbuckling adventure made in colour which even wowed the western audience with its opulence. One of the costliest films of its time in terms of production values, it surprised viewers, used to Dilip Kumar's tragic avatars, when they saw their favourite hero as an alpha male. He rode horses, fought sword duels, outwitted the villains and tamed the pretty shrew played by Nadira. Dilip Kumar came to be known as a complete entertainer, a complete superstar after *Aan*.



LEADER↓

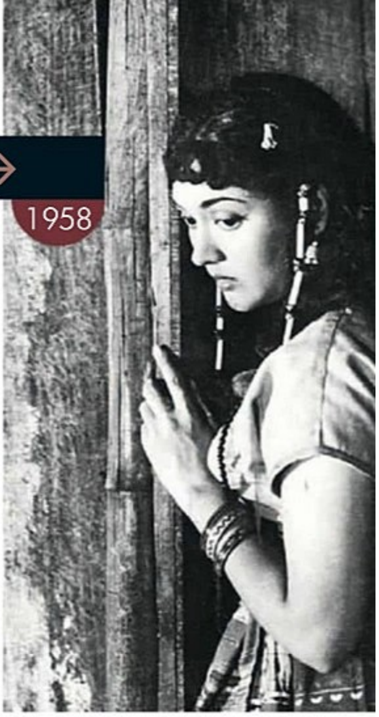
1964

The film is a political satire. Or rather, it begins as a political satire and then segues seamlessly into a murder mystery where the on-the-run hero has to prove his innocence and win back the love of his life. One should watch the film just for Dilip Kumar's comic timing. He's a sheer delight in scenes where he's teasing his beloved on the phone, behaving like a drunkard. And also for the on-screen chemistry between him and Vyjayanthimala.

DAAG

1952

Daag had Shankar (Dilip) drinking himself silly and pining for Paro (Nimmi). He leaves his town for the city, becomes an entrepreneur, earns lots of money and takes to the bottle again when he learns that Paro has been betrothed to another. Director Amiya Chakraborty had a kinder soul than Bimal Roy (*Devdas*) and ensured that the lovers lived happily ever after. The haunting *Ae mere dil kahin aur chal* sung by Talat Mehmood remains composer Shankar-Jaikishan's (who belonged to the Raj Kapoor camp) rare contribution for Dilip.



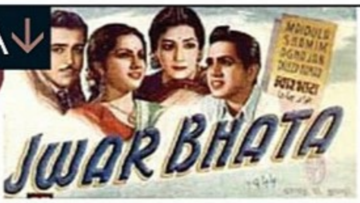
MADHUMATI→

1958

The film was a departure from norm for Bimal Roy, who either made socially-relevant films like *Do Bigha Zameen* or films based on literary works – *Devdas, Biraj Bahu*. The film marked the only collaboration with him and filmmaker Ritvik Ghatak, who wrote the story. The film had a reincarnation theme. *Madhumati* was shot on location, something that wasn't much in practice then. Cinematography was used with great effect to lend an air of mystique to the film. Composer Salil Chowdhury used Assamese folk tunes in most songs, like *Chad gayo paapi bichua, Zulmi sang ankh ladi* or *Ghadi ghadi mora dil dhadke*. Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala carried off the incredible tale with rock-solid performances.

JWAR BHATA↓

1944

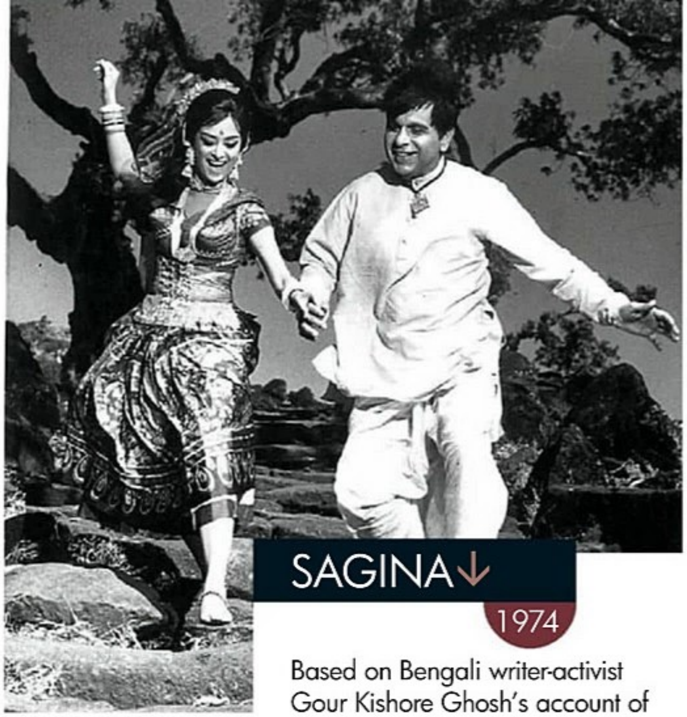


Director Amiya Chakraborty helped give birth to a legend when he cast newbie Dilip Kumar at the behest of Devika Rani for this four-handkerchief melodrama. The film is a primer for 'how to take the audience through an emotional roller coaster'. The film didn't do well but the lanky, good-looking star got noticed by the masses and the filmmakers alike. Reigning superstar Ashok Kumar finally had a contender.

FOOT PATH↓

1953

This is perhaps the most realistic film done by Dilip Kumar. Director Zia Sarhadi, who had Marxist leanings, dreamt up a social noir where the hero is a black marketeer. He has a change of heart towards the end and confesses all to the police. The film's brooding realism was contrary to what Dilip had done before or since and it's a pity that the director later migrated to Pakistan where his creativity got stifled. Khayyam's music is still remembered today, especially the searing *Sham-e-gham ki kasam* sung by Talat Mehmood.



SAGINA↓

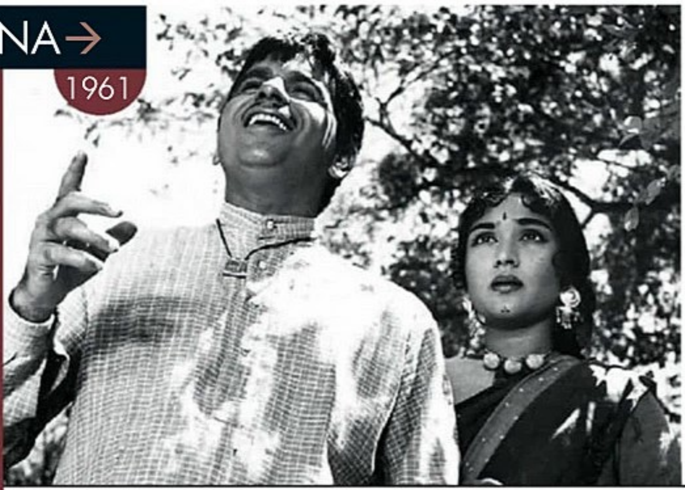
1974

Based on Bengali writer-activist Gour Kishore Ghosh's account of another activist colleague, *Sagina* is the Hindi remake of the Bengali film *Sagina Mahato* (1971). Both films had the same lead pair, Dilip and Saira Banu. The star was in his fifth decade when the film was released but his acting showed no sign of aging. His portrayal of a free-spirited man governed by chance to become the leader of the oppressed remains one of his best performances. The film also had Kishore Kumar giving playback for Dilip for the first time in songs like *Saala main toh saab ban gaya*.

GUNGA JUMNA→

1961

Produced by Dilip Kumar, *Gunga Jumna* is said to be directed by him as well, though the name in the credits says Nitin Bose. Known for his sedate, tragic roles, the thespian showed Fred Astaire-like dexterity in the song *Nain lad jaihen*. Then, we forgot he was a Pathan when he spoke Bhojpuri which was more chaste than our milkman's. The actor's real brother Nasir Khan played the 'good son' who grows up to be a police Inspector. What stopped it from falling into the morass of high melodrama was the natural ease of the performances. Vyjayanthimala looked like a village belle. Her anger at her beloved's younger brother felt real. As did her blind devotion to Gunga. Naushad made use of folk tunes to come up with gems like *Do hanson ka joda bichad gaya re* and *Dhoondo dhoondo re sajna.*



RAM AUR SHYAM→

1967

This was perhaps Dilip Kumar's last big hit as a solo star and what can be more fitting than the fact that he played a double role in the film. It's to his credit that he was able to infuse two different personalities to the roles. Basically it was the story of twins separated at birth. Shyam grows up to be a street-smart man while Ram is a bumpkin much abused by his brother-in-law. Things get right when the duo by chance exchange places.

SAUDAGAR↓

1991

Subhash Ghai took the risk of pitting veterans Raaj Kumar and Dilip Kumar against each other as frenemies and they didn't disappoint. The film was all thunder and lightning, where both stars played to the gallery and tried to outdo each other for claps and ceetees.

AZAAD↓

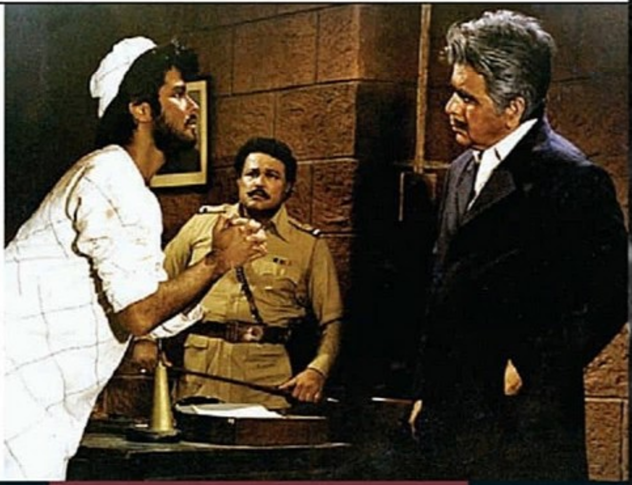
1955

The film was the answer Dilip Kumar was looking for to get out of the depression set in by constantly working in tragedies. It was a remake of the South hit *Aggi Ramudu* (1954) and endeared the thespian to South studios. Dilip Kumar played a triple role of sorts in the film. He is a Robin Hood-like figure who is wanted by the police but is a hero for the masses. Another tragedian, Meena Kumari acted with him in the film and the two had a ball playing larger-than-life characters for once and just having good, clean fun romancing each other in this romcom.

KARMA→

1986

Karma was Subhash Ghai's take on *Sholay*. Instead of a dacoit, he had General Dang (Anupam Kher), head of a whole army of terrorists. The Thakur who enlists jailbirds was this time played by Dilip Kumar, who sends three criminals marked for death row, played by Jackie Shroff, Anil Kapoor and Naseeruddin Shah to end Dr Dang's nefarious activities in exchange for their freedom. The confrontation scenes between Dilip Kumar and Anupam Kher were the highlight of the film.



SUNGHURSH↓

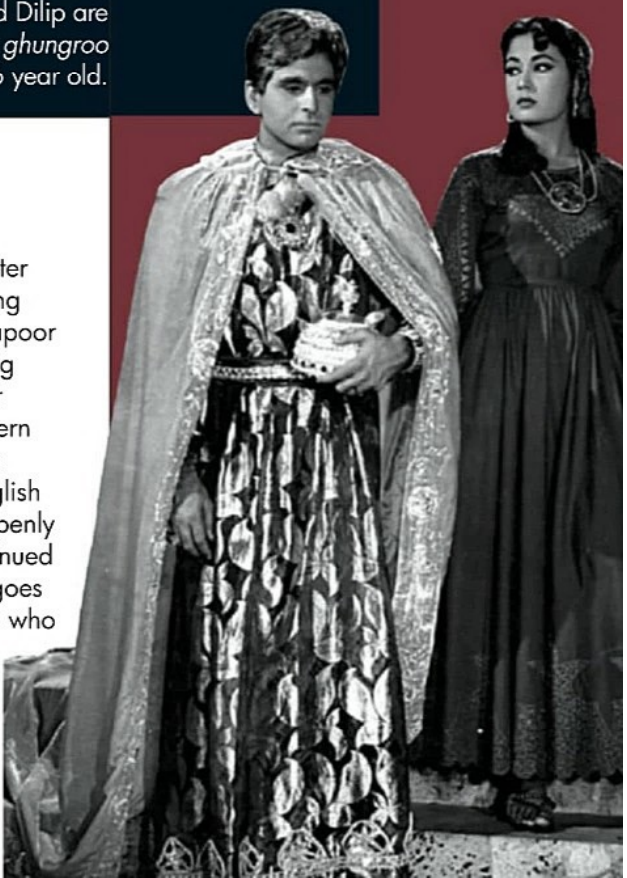
1968

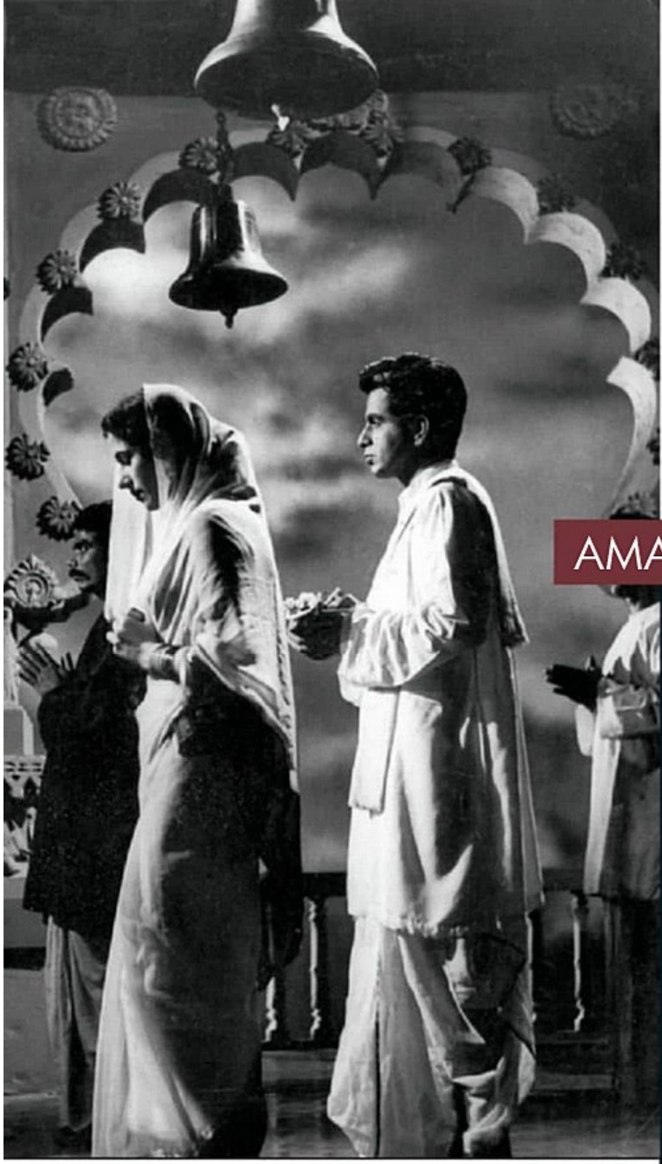
This family-feud drama was a precursor of sorts to Subhash Ghai's *Saudagar*. It's memorable today for the fact that it brought stellar actors like Balraj Sahani, Dilip Kumar and Sanjeev Kumar together in a film. Scenes between Sanjeev and Dilip are a treat to watch. The film is memorable also for the song *Mere pairon mein ghungroo bandha de*. Dilip danced quite well for a 46 year old.

ANDAZ↓

1949

This was perhaps the first blockbuster multi-starrer, with two up-and-coming superstars, Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor and marquee queen Nargis coming together in a love triangle. Director Mehboob Khan made a very modern film for its times. It was hailed as a mirror to the convent educated English speaking generation where girls openly flirted with boys. Dilip Kumar continued his tragedian onslaught and reigned supreme as the bitter suitor whose love goes unrequited. The heroes were called Dilip and Rajen and it was again Mukesh who sang such tragic ditties as *Jhoom jhoom ke nacho aaj* and *Tu kahe agar*. Dilip rumouredly never forgave Raj for poaching his heroine Nargis (Nargis and Raj went on to do 14 more films after this) and singer Mukesh (who only got to sing for Dilip a decade later in *Madhumati* and *Yahudi*).





JOGAN↓

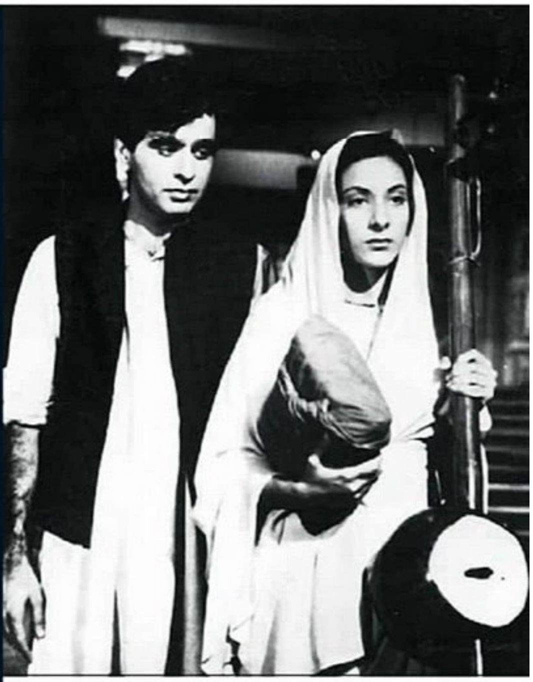
1950

Nargis played a *jogan* (someone who has cast off earthly pursuits and pleasures and has devoted herself to God) and Dilip played an atheist who lived for the moment (shades of *Devdas* here). Dilip's cynicism collided with Nargis's faith and the result was a film where the hero and the heroine looked at each other with burning intensity without a happy ending though. A young Rajendra Kumar was seen looking awed being in the same frame as Dilip Kumar and the film is also famous for the Geeta Dutt *bhajan, Ghoonghat ke pat khol*.

AMAR↓

1954

The actor was forever seeking new channels to satisfy his creative urges. This time, he chose the theme of crime and redemption as his palette. It's perhaps Mehboob Khan's finest outing as a director, where he showcased that man isn't all black and white but composed of shades of grey. Dilip Kumar's eyes, his manners convey the shock, resentment, confusion, guilt and remorse of a man who's raped an innocent in a weak moment and tries to come to term with his crime. Madhubala plays his fiancée who helps bring a closure while Nimmi brilliantly played the village girl raped by a man whom she loved with all her heart. The haunting *Insaaf ka mandir hai yeh* sung by Rafi and composed by Naushad almost became a background character.



←YAHUDI

1958

You can't believe this is a Bimal Roy film as it is far removed from what he had done before or since. The beginning reminds you of *Ben Hur* and both films share the theme of prosecution of Jews by the Romans. But unlike *Ben Hur* which was basically about Christ's teachings, here the story revolved around a Roman prince who falls in love with a Jewish girl and disguises himself as a Jew in order to win her love. It also has a subplot involving age old lost-and-found formula albeit with tragic overtones. Bimal subtly pointed out that religion was just an accident of birth and humanity transcends religious scruples. Dilip Kumar is convincing as Prince Marcus and Meena Kumari ably supports him as his doomed lover Hannah. *Yeh mera Deewanapan hai* has Mukesh returning to sing for Dilip Kumar in this Shankar-Jaikishan composed OST.

MASHAAL↓

1984

Directed by Yash Chopra, it has Dilip Kumar as an angry old man who, troubled by the corrupt system, first starts a newspaper that targets corruption and is later forced by circumstances to take up arms. Anil Kapoor stars as his protégé. Dilip who was in his 60s at the time gave an understated performance of an anguished man who turns his anger into a weapon.

↓DEEDAR

1951

Ashok Kumar's subtle ways were laid to rest by the tear-inducing histrionics of Dilip Kumar. Tragedy found a new king. Dilip plays a blind singer who is cured by Ashok Kumar. The twist in the tale is that they both love the same girl (Nargis). She's Dilip Kumar's childhood sweetheart who doesn't remember him, not even when he sings the song they crooned together as children. He hopes that his restored vision will help restore her memories but that sadly doesn't happen. Angered by it, he blinds himself again in his grief.

SANGDIL←

1952

Sangdil is an adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's classic novel *Jane Eyre*. Dilip plays a brooding Rochester to Madubala's spirited Jane. Charlotte would have enjoyed watching this song-and-dance melodrama with her sisters. The two actors looked made for each other and it's said that their romance first blossomed on the sets of *Sangdil*. *Yeh hawa yeh raat yeh chandni,* sung by Talat Mehmood is remembered even today.

KOHINOOR↓

1960

Tragedy king Dilip Kumar and tragedy queen Meena Kumari again offered relief to the tear ducts of the viewers by acting in this swashbuckling adventure inspired by Errol Flynn's films. The film was a true-blue masala entertainer, replete with sword fights, stunts, romance and plenty of comedy. One of the iconic comic scenes in the movies is from this film. Dilip Kumar and Jeevan are facing each other after a mirror falls from its frame. Dilip Kumar hilariously copies Jeevan's mannerisms, making him believe that Dilip Kumar is his mirror image.

DIL DIYA DARD LIYA→

1966

Loosely based on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights,* it's overly melodramatic and only the combined efforts of Dilip Kumar, Pran and Waheeda Rahman save it from complete mediocrity. The film is remembered mostly today for Naushad and Shakeel Badayuni's supreme effort on the OST which had songs like *Koi saagar dil ko behlata nahin, Phir teri kahani yaad aayi* and *Guzren hain aaj ishq mein.*

URAN KHATOLA

1955

This Naushad produced film can be said to be India's first science fiction/ fantasy film. Dilip Kumar plays a pilot whose plane crashes into some remote part of India. Then, like something out of H Rider Haggard's novels, he meets the denizens of the place who are ruled by a queen. Strangers can't stay in the place for more than eight days, guys can't talk to girls unless they intend to marry them and the statue of the local deity spews smoke. It's a tribute to Dilip's genius that he makes the campy script believable. *Chale aaj tum jahan se* sung by Rafi is played on airwaves even today.

DASTAAN↓

1972

It's said that BR Chopra wanted to make this film eons ago with Dilip but couldn't. So it went to Ashok Kumar and the result was *Afsana* (1951). Maybe the actor had a change of heart and decided to indulge the director and so Chopra went on reprise his own whodunit. There were minor changes in the story. The earlier film was more a love triangle and the latter was like a Hitchcock thriller. It remains a nice enough film where you get to see Dilip Kumar play both the white and the grey-shaded character with aplomb.

AADMI↓

1968

A remake of Tamil film *Aalayamani* (1962), this melodrama had revenge, jealousy, suffering and redemption in large doses. This was the first time Manoj Kumar got to act with his idol Dilip and looks awed in most scenes. Waheeda Rahman as their joint love interest lends able support. The film is indeed a study in the mercurial nature of man but is undertaken in such ham-handed way that you tend to lose the subtext.

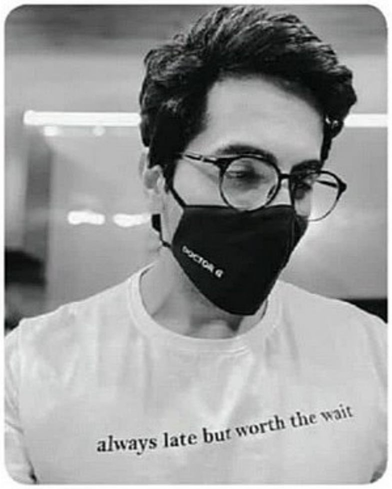
your say

reader's reviews, box-office, celebrity column & more

INSTA LIKE

Medley of moments

Check out the best Instagram posts of the stars from recent times

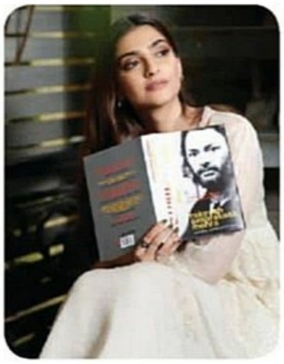

DOCTOR G
always late but worth the wait

@ayushmannk: Day 1 #DoctorG This is the third film I'll be shooting in the pandemic. But summers will be tough. One of the best scripts I've ever read. ***Looks like Ayushmann Khurrana is stoked to finally start shooting for Doctor G.***

@taapsee : Here we are! And it all started because of his instinct and belief that this crazy combination is worth exploring. The man who runs the show for "Outsiders Films" while I'm allowed to boss around. Pranjal and I will be treading that thin line between friendship and business together, having each other's back, while we make sure your every rupee on our projects is worth it! Cheers ! ***Tappsee Pannu has now turned producer and we love how she named her company Outsiders Films.***

@priyankachopra: Timeless India all within the heart of New York City. So much love for @sonanewyork. #throwback ***Priyanka Chopra Jonas took us on a virtual tour of her restaurant Sona in New York and we can only imagine how***

@aliaabhatt: All I need is sunsets & you...... taking my pictures😂😂❤ ***The view and the photographer, both have got us envious of Alia Bhatt.***



@sonamkapoor: #FIRSTLOOK Mehra is a great mentor for any actor in the industry. To see his zeal and vision translate onto the screen is truly magical! He's now sharing his vision and journey with everyone through #TheStrangerInTheMirror. Here's the first look of @ rakeyshommehra's autobiography. Releasing on 27th July, 2021. ***Rakyesh Omprakash Mehra's biogrpahy would be a cracking read indeed.***

Readers send in their feedback *pg 118*

Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders *pg 120*

FILMFARE
SONU SOOD
MEET THE NEW SUPERHERO
KATRINA -VICKY GOING STEADY
NEENA GUPTA
NEETU KAPOOR
BOLLYWOOD

IN THE MAIL

READERS WRITE AND BITE BACK... WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION

Wedded bliss: Yami Gautam and Aditya Dhar

1st Prize ₹1500

YAMI GAUTAM'S DREAM WEDDING

If someone were to ask me about my favourite Bollywood wedding it would be Yami Gautam's wedding with Aditya Dhar. I read about it in *Filmfare* (July) and when I got to know that the wedding planner got a day to plan it all, my amazement knew no bounds. It is high time we change the way we see Indian weddings. Thank you for carrying the story *Filmfare*, appreciate it.

Krishna Iyer, Pallakad

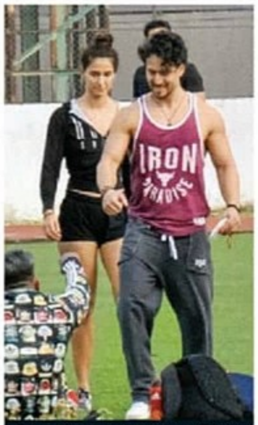
MAN OF THE HOUR

Your cover story in the last issue (July) featuring Sonu Soofd touched my heart. Sonu Sood is someone who has done everything for the masses during the pandemic and he needs to be acknowledged. Thank you *Filmfare* for such an insightful interview. The accompanying feature on how everyone else has also chipped in was the icing on the cake.

Ronak Thapa, Darjeeling

2st Prize ₹1000

Super philanthropist: Sonu Sood


Sporting encounter: Disha Patani and Tiger Shroff

SPORTY DISHA PATANI

Recently, I saw a picture on your social media where Disha was seen playing football with the boys. And now I read this story in the magazine too. Looks like she is prepared to give a tough competition to the boys not just on screen but off it too. You go girl!

Rinki Bajaj, New Delhi

DILIP KUMAR IS NO MORE

I remember waking up to seeing this news on your social media handles on that dreadful day. I've been a huge fan of Dilip Kumar since my childhood and to witness this day made me feel like it's the end of an era. RIP Dilip Kumar!

Jagdish Kumar, Rohtak

SALIM-JAVED DOCUMENTARY

The news piece on Salman Khan producing a documentary with Farhan and Zoya Akhtar based on the life of Salim-Javed is one of the best things I have heard this month (July). Thank you *Filmfare* for bringing the happy news, my father is a huge Salim Khan fan and he urged me to write to you guys.

Dharmesh Chawla, Chandigarh

Cuteness overload: Kartik Aaryan

CUTE KARTIK

Kartik Aaryan as an actor looks great in love stories according to me. His cute looks are apt for romantic films, so I request him to do more of them. Great to read that he is teaming up for another romantic film with Sajid Nadiadwala. Waiting for this one.

Kiran Joshi, Pune

MASTER REMAKE

Filmfare brings the juiciest news from Bollywood every month and this time when I was reading your digital magazine I got to know that Salman is all set to reprise Thalapathy Vijay's role in the *Master's* remake. I love both Vijay and Salman and this will make for another superhit for sure.

Jasmine Reddy, Bangalore

SUSHANT'S UNTIMELY DEMISE

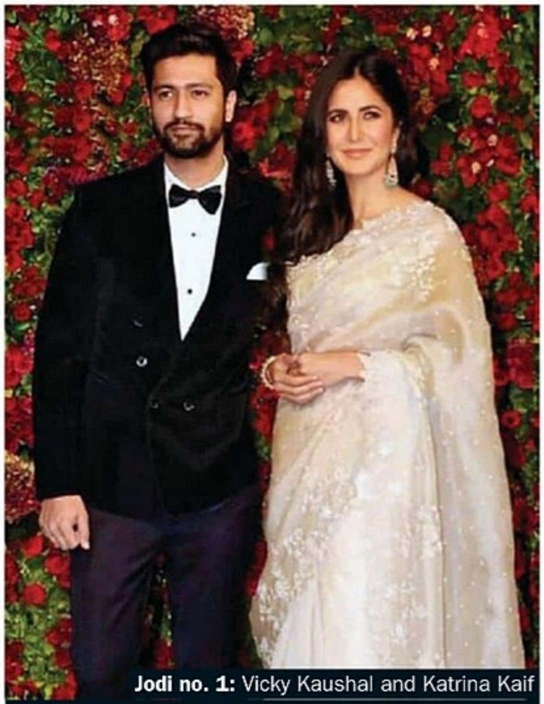
It's been over a year since the shocking news of Sushant Singh Rajput's death by suicide broke the internet. Your last issue (July) carried an item about how the rented house that he was living in is now up for sale. Guess it's time we all slowly move ahead.

Kamal Rathod, Udaipur

POOJA BHATT'S COMEBACK

Pooja Bhatt hasn't been in the limelight off late. But with her recent digital show *Bombay Begums,* she seems to be back in the game. Her interview in your last issue (July) was interesting to read. She was at her bindass best. It was a refreshing change from the usual politically-correct interviews.

Karuna Vats, Secunderabad



Jodi no. 1: Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif

LOVEBIRDS VICKY-KATRINA

I read in your last issue (July) that Harshvardhan Kapoor revealed on a show that Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif are dating. I am actually a huge fan of Katrina and I am so excited to hear this as she deserves true love after a bad heartbreak that she suffered in the past. They do look good together, I must say.

Kalindi Nath, Almora

Her own woman: Neena Gupta

NEENA GUPTA'S CONFESSIONS

A heart-to-heart talk with Neena Gupta was an easy breezy read in your last issue (July). I adored her candid answers. She has been unapologetic about the way she has lived her life and that was reflected in the interview as well. It came a full circle for sure with a mix of fun and gossip.

Aniruddh Sen, Kolkata

Second innings: Neetu Kapoor

SWEETHEART NEETU KAPOOR

Only one thing came to my mind after reading Neetu Kapoor's interview in your last issue (July) , that she's such a sweetheart. She did everything for her children and her family. She's free of her responsibilities now and deserves a big comeback. I will surely go watch *Jug Jugg Jeeyo* just for her. You guys should feature senior actors on a regular basis.

Rakesh Mathur, Mathura

FASHION FORWARD *FILMFARE*

I absolutely love your fashion pages and wait for them every month. They give such awesome insights into what's trending. My personal favourite from the July issue was the biker shorts page. I loved the different pictures of Hollywood and Bollywood stars

Minoo Hans, Delhi

Just one Point

Ravishing: Madhuri Dixit

Filmfare I'm loving how you have started giving space to beauties like Raveena Tandon, Madhuri Dixit and Shilpa Shetty on your social media and not just the current top lot.

Sunny Kapoor, Dalhousie

The candid questions with Shatrugan Sinha at the end of the magazine always crack me up. Thank you for the entertainment *Filmfare*.

Komalika Chatterjee, Bangalore

It's tough to not follow *Filmfare* on social media as all my friends keep gushing about your posts. Always entertaining. Kudos to everyone at *Filmfare*.

Gunjan Shah, Baroda

The piece remembering late actor Chandrashekhar was pure gold. It gave me so many details about the veteran's life.

Ramesh Chandra Jain, Asansol

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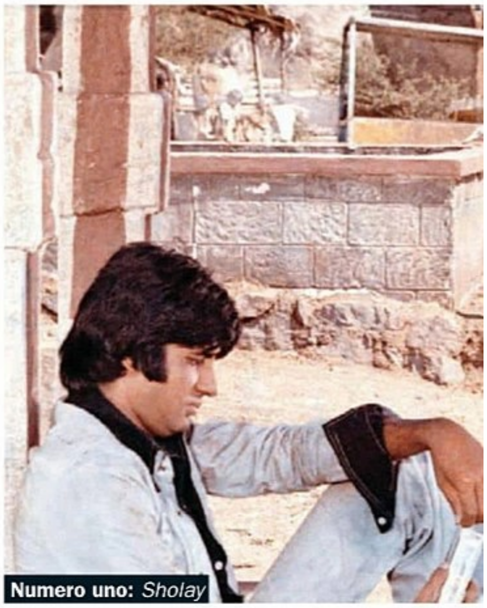
PHOTOGRAPH: MEETESH TANEJA

Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire



Numero uno: *Sholay*

Will India be able to overcome the third wave of COVID-19?

Amit Jain, New Delhi

If people behave like responsible adults, then surely. But what we're seeing is completely the opposite. People seem to have lost all fear of the pandemic. How many more deaths would bring the lesson home?

How do we know we're with the right person in a relationship?

Md Salim, Kolkata

Remember that two people are needed in a relationship. Both have to be right for each other.

What do rains remind you of?

Jaideep Sarkar, Kolkata

Rains remind me of the song *Suhana safar aur yeh mausam haseen* from *Madhumati*. They bring back pleasant memories of childhood, growing up with family and eating tasty food *(pakoras)* during the rains.

Do you like to gossip?

Abhijit Ghosh, 24 Parganas (North)

Not really. But I like to listen to it. Healthy gossip is fun. As long as no harm comes to anybody it's okay to gossip. But it shouldn't turn out to be malicious.

How did you propose to your wife Poonam?

Abhijit Ghosh, 24 Parganas (North)

Although it's history now, I do remember that I proposed to her in the most beautiful and romantic manner. Don't ask me for every detail, please. Also, as I mentioned in a show, I got rejected by her mother but never got dejected by that and finally won her over.

Why do celebrity divorces make more noise than marriages?

Jaideep Sarkar, Kolkata

Why shouldn't they give birth to more gossip than marriage? Especially in today's world, where break-up songs too become popular. Haven't you heard the famous ditty -- *Saiyan ji se aaj maine* break-up *kar liya*. Such a song would have been an unheard of thing during our days. Negative news attracts more curiosity than good or positive news. So enjoy the gossip while you can, till the next bit comes along.

In the second wave of COVID-19, it was observed that cheaters and charity both played a major role. Comments...

Tulsi Tankha, Ratlam

It's sad and unfair that people are resorting to falsehood to make a petty profit even in these troubled times. Angels and demons exist in every sphere, as they say. What you want to become is up to you.

What qualities/principles help generate social values?

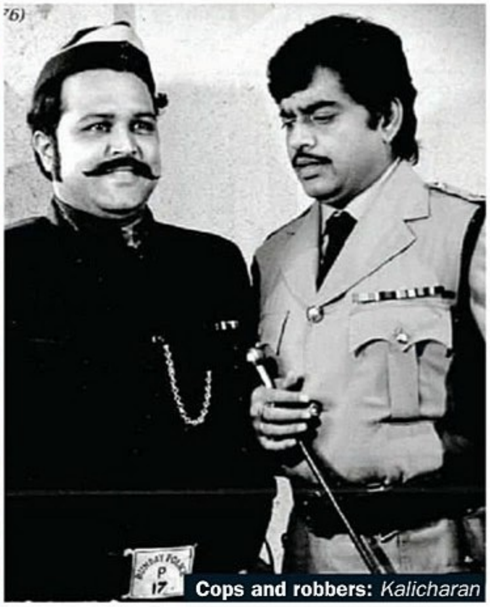
Pankaj Goyal, Ambala

Sincerity, integrity, good upbringing, morals,

You played a memorable police officer in *Kalicharan* and of course many pivotal roles in a number of films. If you weren't an actor and later a politician, in which other field would you have risen?

Anil R Torne, Pune

I could have been a sportsperson, a doctor, a lawyer and would have excelled in any field I'd chosen because of my tenacity and dedication. Thanks to the acting profession, I was able to fulfill many such roles, which people still find 'memorable' -- as you yourself have so kindly mentioned.



Cops and robbers: *Kalicharan*

1st Prize

What is the prime goal of humanity?

Santosh Bhatia, Panchkula

Kindness, sensitivity, compassion and care are the best qualities we should cultivate in order to become better versions of ourselves. I believe it's the great spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who has said that, "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." And I agree with it wholeheartedly.

2nd Prize

Israel is the first nation in the world to tide over the COVID-19 pandemic by all out perpetual efforts. Have you any hopes of India getting rid of the pandemic in the near future?

Anil R Torne, Pune

That'll only happen when every Indian gets vaccinated. It's the duty of the government to get it done. And also the duty of every individual in the current age limit at least to see to it that he/she is vaccinated. The sooner, the better.

honesty, discipline etc, are some of the things that generate social values.

Every field has a retirement age. What about the film industry?

Atul Tankha, Ratlam

The entertainment world doesn't have an expiry date. The show must go on, no matter what.

What's one film you regret doing and one you regret not signing?

Swadha Pant, Nainital

Regret not signing, several -- including *Sholay, Deewaar, Zanjeer* and many more. But I'm also happy that my dear friend and everyone's favourite, Amitabh Bachchan, got selected in these films and was able to rise and shine to the stature he deserved. Regret doing -- well, *raat gayi baat gayi*, as they say. Let bygones be bygones.

Nowadays doctors aren't treated as gods. Why?

Bharat Kajaria, Mumbai

In today's volatile world, everything is commercialised. Hence, the medical profession too has seemingly lost its noble sheen. Also, our constant dependence on technology has made us immune to miracles. We have an answer for everything that's happening around us. The workings of doctors no longer seem mysterious in the times of google.

Why are politicians and rich people never punished for their crimes?

Bharat Kajaria, Mumbai

It's all about money and power. You must have heard the famous saying that money covers a multitude of sins.

What has the pandemic taught us?

Akmal Rasheed, Bangalore

To be grateful for what you have and not to take anything for granted, as things can change in the blink of an eye.

Fake ration card, fake voter Id and now even fake vaccination! What is your opinion?

R.Ramakrishnan, via email

What a shame. We don't seem to have a conscience left, really. These are sad, sad times.

(Feature co-ordinated by DEVESH SHARMA)

Please note: The column doesn't reflect Shatrughan Sinha's political or personal views. His answers are given in jest and humour.

Win!
CASH PRIZES

1st prize	2nd prize
₹3000	₹2000

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YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO: Shatrughan Sinha, who insists his answers do not reflect his political and social views.

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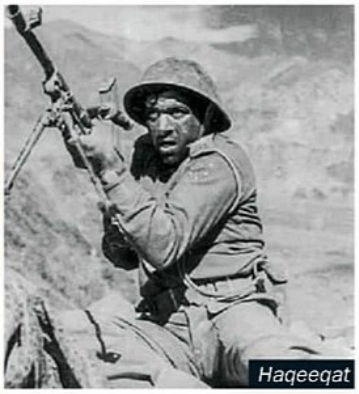
WAR AND CINEMA

Border


Haqeeqat

Shershaah

Why do war films get made? Some say that every war film, even those which glorify war, is an anti-war film as it acquaints us with the horrors of war and makes us realise the futility of it. Americans have always been obsessed with war films. One of the best that has come out from Hollywood studios is the Tom Hanks starrer *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), directed by Steven Spileberg. World War II veterans who were still alive at that time were said to have tears flowing from their eyes after they watched the film. Their verdict was that it was all there minus the smell. Another hugely influential film is the war comedy *Good Morning, Vietnam*. It chronicled the exploits of a real-life radio jockey, Adrian Cronauer, who was embedded among the armed forces during the Vietnam War and ran a popular radio service for the entertainment of the troops. He was played by Robin Williams in the film. The central character is appalled by the devastation he witnesses around him and his commentary becomes increasingly bizarre as the war continues. Williams is said to have improvised most of the chatter in the film.

In India, Chetan Anand was one filmmaker who was fascinated with war. Soon after the Chinese betrayal of 1962, he made *Haqeeqat* (1964), which depicted the plight of our braveheart soldiers in Ladakh, who fought on till their last breath despite lacking proper supplies or ammunition. In 1973, he made another war movie called *Hindustan Ki Kasam*, which brought to life the exploits of the ace Indian Ace Force pilots who took part in Operation Tiger Lily against their Pakistani counterparts during the 1971 War.

JP Dutta took over Chetan Anand's mantle. His *Border* (1997) is regarded as the most popular Hindi war film. It was based on the events that happened during the famous Battle of Longewala in 1971, which turned the tide of war in favour of the Indians. His *LOC: Kargil* (2003) was based on the stories which came out of the 1999 Kargil War. The who's who of Indian stars, comprising Sanjay Dutt, Ajay Devgn, Abhishek Bachchan, Saif Ali Khan, Akshaye Khanna, Nagarjuna, Suniel Shetty, Manoj Bajpayee and many more considered it a point of honour to appear in the film. Twenty years after the conflict, Kargil is being revisited again, this time in a Dharma film called *Shershaah*. This was the code name given to Captain Vikram Batra, who was killed in action while trying to wrest a crucial post from the hands of the Pakistanis and was awarded Param Vir Chakra for his sacrifice. Abhishek Bachchan played Batra in *LOC* but that was a brief appearance. This time around, the whole war scenario would be seen from the point of view of the martyred soldier. The film will also delve into his private life and make us aware of the many sacrifices that the families of army personnel routinely put forth. It's a new territory for the banner. They had earlier given us the well made *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* (2020) and we're sure *Shershaah* will turn out to be as thought-provoking and entertaining as *Gunjan Saxena*...

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